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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **ImagineFX**

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Reimagine Zelda's Link as a fierce warrior with **Even Mehl Amundsen**

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Okay, I have to admit something. I've never played The Legend of Zelda. I know, it's a disgrace. The equivalent of having never listened to The Beatles, or *kind of* knowing my mother's birthday... I'm ashamed.

But that doesn't mean I don't appreciate what an iconic character Link is. The first pixel person, in fact, that came to mind when thinking about reimagining a classic game character for the cover. Artist Even Mehl

Amundsen was the perfect artist for the job, making old Linkypoos his very own. Check out how he did it on page 56.

Now that you've got your copy, I hope you enjoy the free Ebook of amazing game art that comes with it (see page 29), filled with 18 workshops for you to pore over. That's after you get through the awesome stuff in these pages. Elliott Lilly makes you take an art test... no wait, come back! Don't you know that 'test' has the same number of letters as 'game'? (I know!!) Plus, following Elliott's workshop on page 68 is not only fun, but will also set you right for when you have to prove your skills to hiring studios.

There are plenty of other insightful workshops in here too, but a highlight for me was speaking to Geoffrey Ernault about his entry into art. Temporarily blinded as a kid, his dad talked him through the Star Wars films, while the artist created his own imagery. On page 40 you can see the work he's now creating as a pro... Right! Time to fire up 'The Nintendo' to play 'Link'. He's a legend, after all.

Beren

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Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



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ImagineFX Contents

Your art

10 Reader FXPosé
Lovely leeches, female orcs,
Fuzzawumps, Lady Macbeth,
a horrifying harvest and more.

News and events

20 Mobile art goes big
Insiders tell us how digital
artists can benefit from the
rise of mobile game art.

24 Artist in residence
Bulgarian illustrator Svetlin
Velinov on why his studio is
both his castle and his prison.

Your questions

32 Artist Q&A
How to paint icy caverns,
female pirates, heavy rain,
landscapes (fungal or
otherwise), creatures and more.

Features

40 Geoffrey Ernault
The French gaming and sci-fi
concept artist is about to
embark on a new adventure.

46 Studio profile
A respect for its creative staff
has seen Germany's mobile
games studio Wooga thrive.

50 Sketchbook
Dan Howard opens up his
sketchbook to reveal horned
women and mutant turtles.

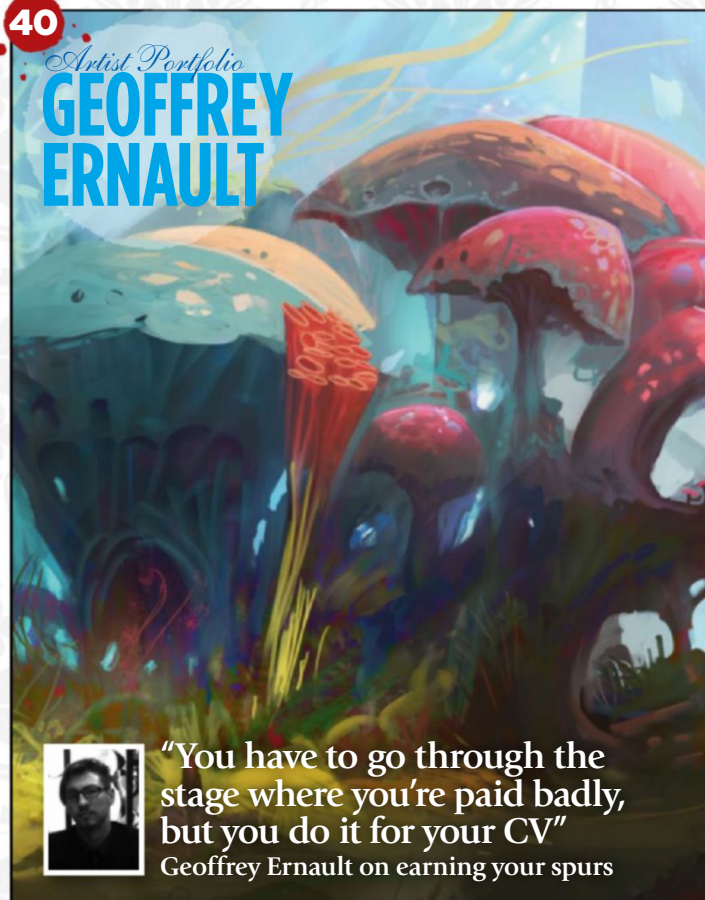
Reviews

92 Software
95 Training
96 Books

Regulars

3 Editor's letter
6 Resources
28 Letters
30 Subscriptions: US
44 Back issues
60 Subs: worldwide
84 Next month
90 Subs: digital

40



"You have to go through the
stage where you're paid badly,
but you do it for your CV"
Geoffrey Ernault on earning your spurs

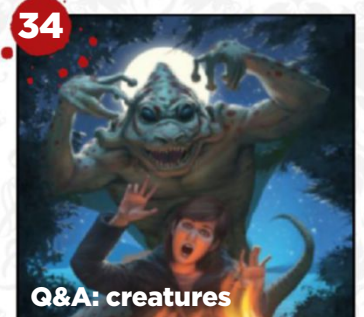
Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 10 for the best new art ➡➡

34



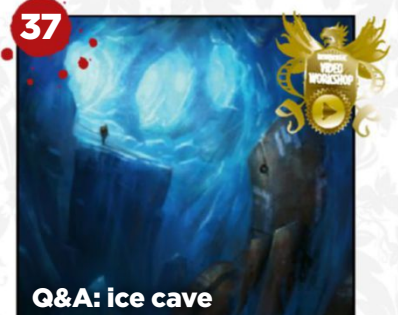
46



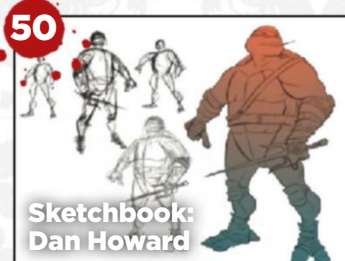
36



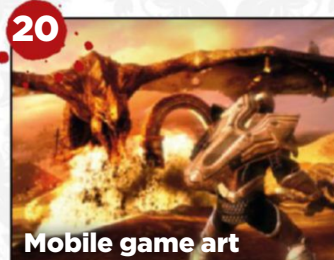
37



50



20



24



ImagineFX Workshops

Advice and techniques from pro artists...



56 Reimagine a game character

Even Mehl Amundsen's fresh take on Link.



62 How to work like a games artist

Remko Troost on the process of video game art.



68 Depict a derelict environment

Elliott Lilly shows you how to excel at an art test.



73 Controlling colours in Krita

Katarzyna Oleska explains Color Selector basics.



74 Using a limited colour palette

Matt Gaser keeps a tight rein on his colours.



78 Paint a dragon with personality

Manuel Castañón paints an original dragon.



80 How to design a unique species

Ilya Golitsyn encourages you to ask "why?"



86 Create a game boss, Blizzard-style

Jie Gao shares his lighting and colouring methods.

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES

Turn over the page for this issue's art assets



GET YOUR
FREE GAME
ART EBOOK!

29

How to paint Link

FANTASY illustrator

Inspiration and advice from the best traditional artists

100 FXPosé Traditional

Michael C Hayes' angelic work.

104 Movement and scale

James Gurney on location.

112 Colour and detail

Brynn Metheney on animals.

114 First Impressions

William Stout talks dinosaurs.



104



The familiar refreshed



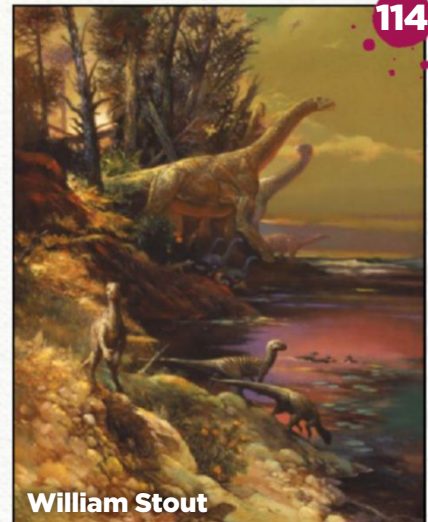
106

Plein air art



112

Accurate animals



114

William Stout



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Resources

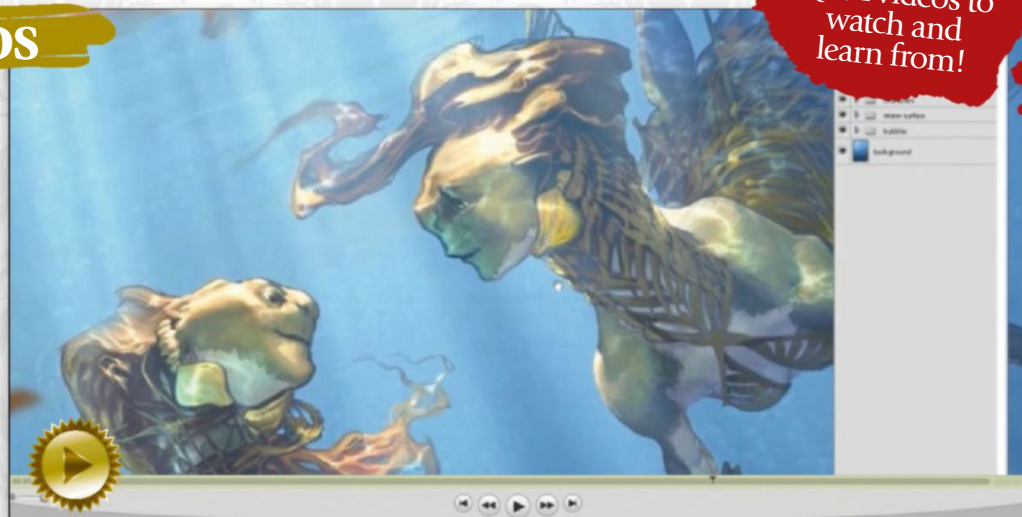
Getting hold of all of this issue's videos, artwork and brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <http://ifxm.ag/player127one>

OVER 4 HOURS
of workshop and Q&A videos to watch and learn from!

WORKSHOP VIDEOS

Design a unique species

Ilya Golitsyn encourages you to ask "why?" as he illustrates amphibian humanoids for a video game.



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You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

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2 Find the files you want

Search through the list of resources to watch or download.

3 Download what you need

You can download all of the files at once, or individually.

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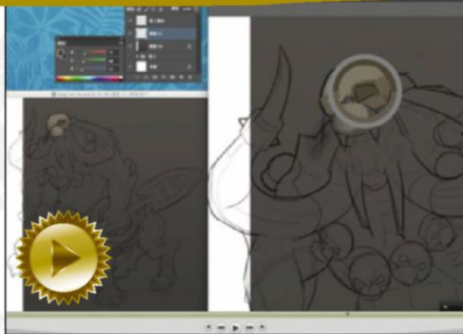




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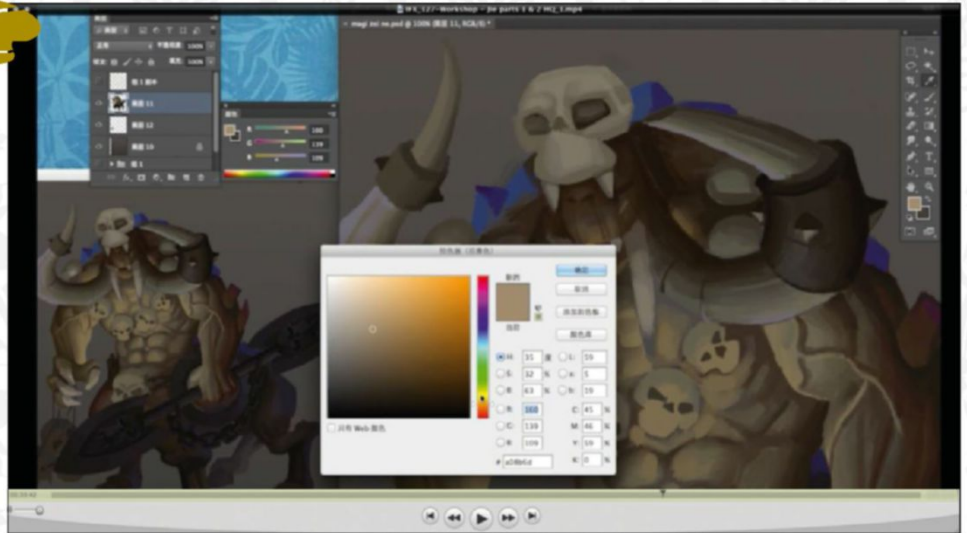
Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art

WORKSHOP VIDEOS



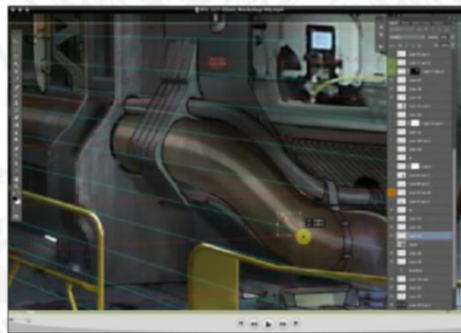
Jie Gao

Utilise lighting and colouring methods to illustrate a video-game boss character. Plus WIPs, brushes and final image



Elliott Lilly

Learn how to not only survive but thrive at a video game art test, by turning a pre-existing piece of art into a coherent environment for a video game concept. Plus WIPs, brushes and final image



Q&A VIDEOS



Tony Foti

Understand how to take charge of references, in order to produce great art. Plus WIPs and final image



Mark Molner

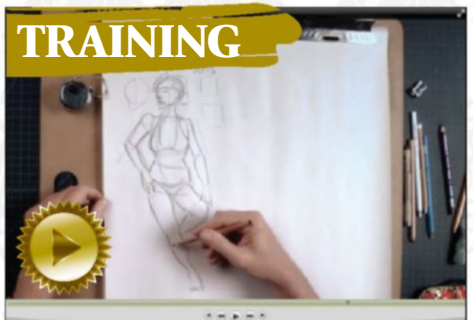
See how to capture the elusive quality of ice, to depict the inside of a glacier. Plus WIPs and final image



Nick Harris

Use ample lighting on unusual shapes to paint a believable fungal landscape. Plus WIPs and final image

TRAINING



Van Arno

See how the Lowbrow artist freezes time in a beginner-friendly guide to drawing from life, Figure Fundamentals Volume 1.

AND ALL THIS! WIPs and finished art available to download, created by professional artists from around the world including this issue, Even Mehl Amundsen, Manuel Castañón, Matt Gaser, Brynn Metheney, Remko Troost, James Gurney and others.

16 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...

IFX_SPOTS

Ilya Golitsyn used this for painting air bubbles in this issue's workshop.



GASER OIL BRUSH

A great brush for blocking in colour and landscapes, says Matt Gaser.



TYRION

Manuel Castañón's favourite brush. "I use it for everything," he says.







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THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Alix Branwyn

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Alix started her art career as a tattoo artist, but discovered that digital canvases were much more appealing (not to mention less squirmy) and she made the switch to full-time illustration.

After a spell making art for posters, T-shirts and other print media, she traded her career in commercial illustration to begin freelancing.

"This change enabled me to get back to producing work I love," she says, "character and creature work for fantasy, horror, and game art - with lots of hidden touches and details for the keen observer!"



1 COMPARTMENTALIZE "In this piece I experimented with using 3D blocking to place the figure and the cubes floating around them in front of the camera. I used the render as a reference along with various images to help get textures and lighting down."

2 HARVEST OF DESPAIR "I wanted to build a creepy scene of people buried like crops having their suffering harvested by mysterious figures. I tried to contrast the nonchalance in the facial expressions of the harvesters with the anguish of their victims."

3 ASTRAEA RATHE "This personal piece is a character for a story I haven't finished yet. With this one I wanted to work with creating narrative and storytelling through interactions between characters, expressions and background elements."





Artist crit

Comic book illustrator, Adriana Melo sees plenty of storytelling potential in Alix's work



"There's a sense of fluid movement in Alix's work that's intriguing. Harvest of Despair conveys depth and impact with the men's dramatic expressions."



Nadia Enis

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MEDIA: Photoshop



The self-taught artist has worked for hire since 2008, which for the past five years has mainly been in the games industry, a field in which she also teaches.

"I've varied my style a lot in my career, fitting to briefings or target groups, and it never bothered me until recently," Nadia says. "Last year I felt the need to find my own home and decorate it. So I started a search for a visual language that can describe how I see the world."

"I'm still searching for my voice, or for the story that I want to tell. I've already found my personal guide though. It seems to be humour."

Nadia's influenced by artists whose illustrations are windows into their inner world, such as the surreal power of Sergey Kolesov and the gentle elegance of Adam Tan.

2

© Paizo



1 5TH ELEMENT "This illustration was done for a fan-based artbook, that was successfully funded on Kickstarter. I wanted to try out a new mix of styles."

2 PATHFINDER "I was more than happy when Paizo commissioned me for half-orc characters, especially as they were women warriors. I'm weirdly attracted to this combination and had a lot of fun doing those. I grew fond of this lady in particular."

3 JINX "I started drawing in the manga style and even though I tend to be far away from it nowadays, sometimes I like to go back and visit this old friend of mine. Especially when doing fan art like this."

3

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Nadia has a distinctive style and an eye for intriguing and unique characters – from heroes to robots! Her designs lend themselves to everything from animation to game concept art. She's certainly one to watch."

Alice Pattillo,
Staff Writer



Gemma Wilson

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MEDIA: Photoshop



A freelance illustrator and visual concept artist, Gemma lives in Perth. It's not a city known for its abundance of creative careers, but she says she can't imagine doing anything else.

"One of my biggest influences growing up was Roald Dahl," she says. "His stories would take my imagination to the edge and back. Osamu Tezuka is also high on the list. His work reminds me that you don't need a serious style to convey a serious message."

Gemma mainly uses Photoshop to paint, but also loves to work with markers and gouache paint.

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"The first thing I notice is Gemma's bold use of colour, which instantly grabs the eye. She's equally adept at depicting cuddly and creepy, all with a cartoon aesthetic. Hold on though, a cuddly leech (Lolly)? Oh my!"

Beren Neale
Acting Editor

1



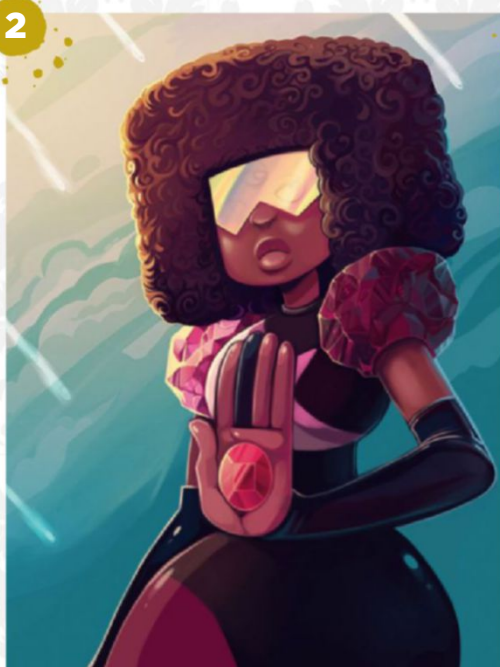
1 CAMP OUT "Two of my characters from a future comic project enjoying a campfire meal before they are rudely interrupted. Andrea (the small one) is used to the wilds, whilst Ben (the big one) is used to the finer things in life, but lends his strength in a tight spot."

2 GARNET "Garnet is from the brilliant cartoon Steven Universe. She's such a strong, stoic character. I admit I took liberties with her shoulder pads. Painting that many irregular facets was a challenge, but I really enjoyed trying to emulate the refracting light and guessing which facets should sparkle the most."

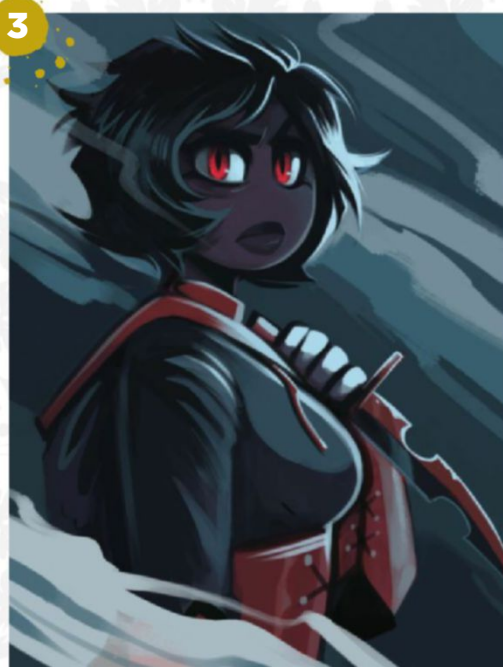
3 LOLLY "Lolly is another character from my comic project. She's an anthropomorphic leech and ever since I made her I kind of think of leeches as cuddly looking. This image started off as a quick colour sketch on paper, but I liked her expression so I painted it in Photoshop in one hour."

4 SOPHIE AND HER FUZZAWUMP "Sophie enjoys long peaceful dreams as long as her Fuzzawump keeps her company. The fluffy beast protects the young girl in the land of slumber whilst driving away her nasty nightmares. I still need to practise painting foliage, but I enjoyed painting copious amounts of fur."

2



3





+ Katy Grierson

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EMAIL: katy@kovah.co.uk

MEDIA: Photoshop



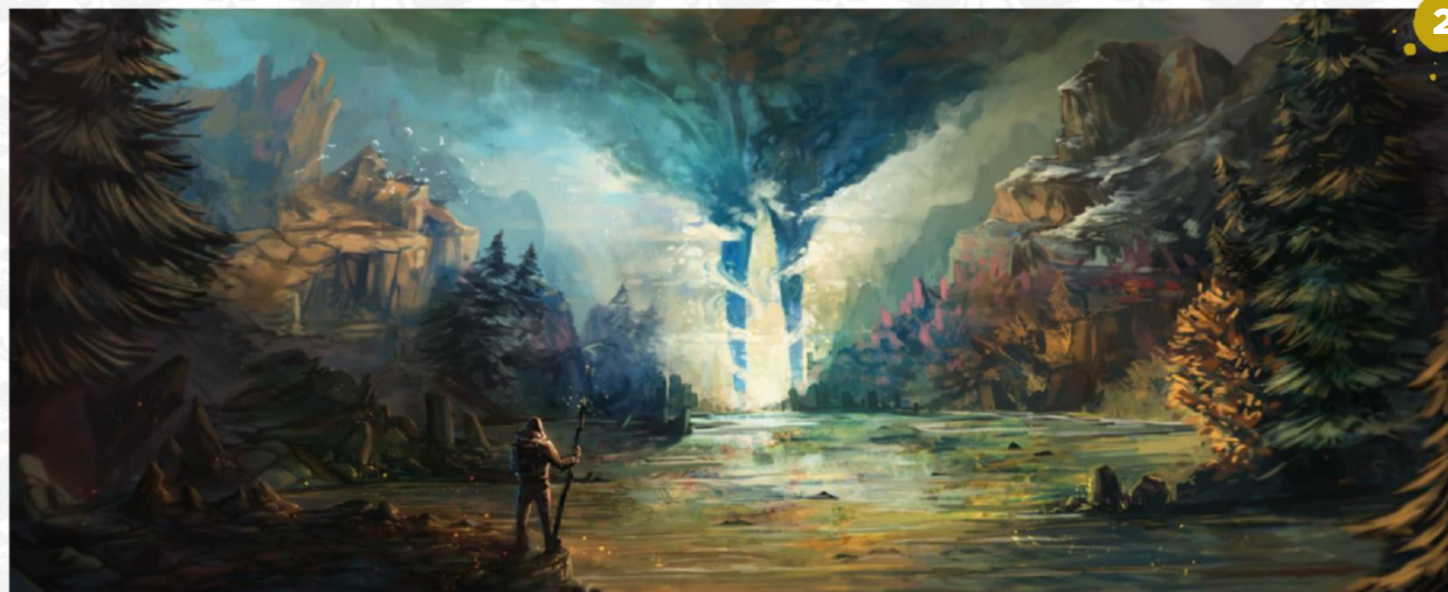
Freelance illustrator and concept artist Katy specialises in environments. "I've been drawing and painting since I can remember, and feel especially privileged that I'm able to do so as my job." The artist says she's always had an active imagination, and takes great pleasure in world building and being able to share those creations with others via her paintings and drawings.

"I've always lived on the coast and take a great deal of inspiration from my surroundings. Vast, dramatic skies are among the things I enjoy painting the most - with a fantasy influence, of course! I enjoy putting a great deal of narrative into my work, along with using colour to pull the viewer in."

1 GOLDEN CLIFFS "This was originally a warm-up painting I did one morning. I liked the colour scheme so much I couldn't help but take it to finish. I love that it both inspires a calming feeling as well as the sense of impending adventure just around the corner."

2 DISTANT STACKS "A personal piece with a sense of adventure about it. I took great delight in the range of colours I could use and blend together in this image, without it becoming gaudy or overworked. I think the piece takes the viewer right into the canvas."

3 ACID VALLEY "An experimental piece that leans towards my occasional urge to do something sci-fi. I wanted to establish a rather unsettling mood to the piece, as well as a sense of mystery as to what the circular structure in the distance was. To find this out would mean traversing the noxious environment, unfortunately!"





IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Katy certainly has a good eye for composing compelling landscapes. And it's nice to know that England's coastal scenery contributes in some part to the dramatic looking fantasy and sci-fi environments she paints."
Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor



3

1

IMAGINEFX CRIT

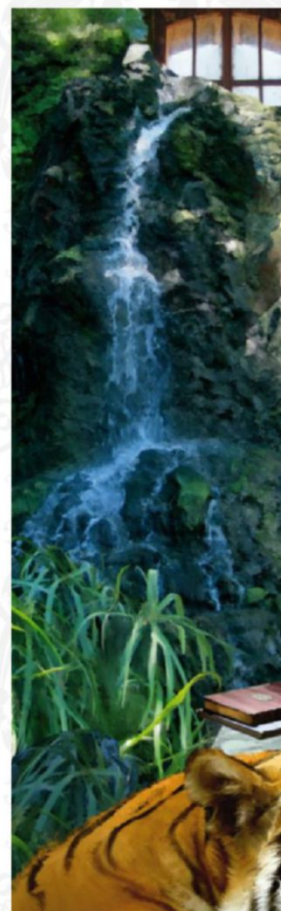


"Elizabeth has an extraordinary ability to convey the atmosphere from her pieces to the viewer. I shivered when I first saw *The Drowning* and that's not just down to the character's pose – it's lighting and colour, too."

Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor



2





3



4

Elizabeth Leggett

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Elizabeth is a current Hugo Award nominee and freelance illustrator living in New Mexico. With numerous publications under her belt, she completed a full 78 card tarot deck in 2013.

Elizabeth finds her inspiration through the novels and short stories she illustrates. When painting for herself, she makes a beeline for classic science fiction and fantasy writing, with her go-to writers being Neil Gaiman and Ray Bradbury. She is also deeply (pun not intended) drawn to water themes.

"My husband and I enjoy tabletop role-playing games," she says, "fostering kittens and dreaming about how we would spend our lottery money if we ever won!"

1 GLASHTYN SHANTY "SJ Tucker wrote a haunting song inspired by the glashtyn legend and I wanted to play with icy, slushy marsh water. The dark trees, cold water and brown reeds needed to be as much a player in this story as the girl and the glashtyn."

2 THE DROWNING "A special project was needed to help pay for my daughter to travel around Europe with an orchestra. I contacted musician SJ Tucker and she told me 12 songs she thought would be beautiful to illustrate. The Drowning was one of them."

3 PRICK OF MADNESS "I'm doing 12 Shakespearean pieces. Lady Macbeth is such a complex character. I chose to have her carry her crown rather than wear it, to convey the weight of her guilt over her desire for power."

4 PARADE IN LIGHT "I've rarely worked with modern background settings, but was told it was something often requested by art directors. I've always wondered what would've happened if Wendy had taken over from Peter Pan. What would the edge of her Neverland look like?"

SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

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Daniel Djanie created this character style exploration for a Mafia-themed prototype.



Mobile art hits the big time!

Changing times With high-end art in demand, we find out how artists can tap into the new world of mobile gaming

Think of mobile games and you might think of a bright, shiny fad like Bejeweled. But as devices get more powerful, they're actually getting closer to the quality of AAA games for the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One.

And as mobile gaming becomes big business, the money's not just going to coders. Digital artists are getting a slice, too. So is this a potentially lucrative new market for your digital art skills?

Jack Gilson, lead artist at Wooga, starts by urging you to shed any preconceptions about mobile. "It's one of the largest platforms for games right now," he says. "People who would never have usually played any type of video game, such as grandmothers, are now doing so." Even free games are becoming cash cows, by charging for add-ons



Another character style exploration by Gameduell's Daniel Djanie, this time for a space-war themed title.



Infinity Blade, developed by Chair Entertainment and Epic Games, was the first iOS video game to run on the Unreal Engine.

and access to extra levels. And so artists are increasingly in demand.

"Companies like Gameloft and Zynga are spending mega bucks on art teams," says Jack. "With most mobile companies now, the team sizes are getting way bigger, as art quality needs to excel to stand out." Take Gameduell, where Daniel Nikoi Djanie is



working as head of illustration. "Despite having been in the business for more than 10 years, we're currently reinventing ourselves – and one major part of this change is a strong focus on high-quality artwork," he says.

"Our team is continuously growing; at the

moment we're 20 people led by Rockstar's former art director Ian Bowden and myself."

And we're not just talking about the work of 3D artists. "2D will always have a place in mobile games, because although more games are becoming rendered sprites, they're essentially all hand-sketched first and then made in a 3D software package," explains Jack. "Concept artists will always be needed."

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

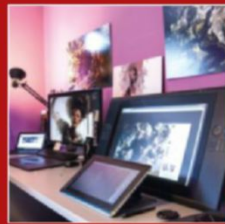
While 3D artists on the whole are better paid than 2D artists, Daniel believes the latter role can be more rewarding creatively. "Being a 2D artist myself, I feel that I have more



URBAN UPSTART

Up-and-coming indie game developer Pixelbomb Games reveals how it's used architectural elements from Manchester in its debut shoot-em up.

Page 23



A VISION IN PURPLE

The walls of Svetlin Velinov's studio are painted a calming purple, which is in contrast to the content of his often action-packed fantasy art!

Page 24



DOUBLE WHAMMY

Discover how writer AJ Lieberman and artist Darren Rawlings cut out the middlemen, teamed up and published their own graphic novels.

Page 27



“With most mobile companies, the team sizes are getting way bigger, as art quality needs to excel to stand out”

possibilities in this area for artistic expression,” he explains, “because the individual artistic identity is more secondary and exchangeable in 3D artwork.”

Donald Mustard, creative director of Chair Entertainment – the company behind



landmark iOS game *Infinity Blade* – also stresses the possibilities for creative expression. “Modern devices are very powerful and so

artists can now more fully realise their visions and ideas than ever before,” he says. “We’re now seeing huge diversity in the art direction of different games, from retro to realistic, and everything in between.” ➔



Because it's a hidden object game, the background art in the newest Wooga hit *Agent Alice* is key, because players will spend a lot of time examining it.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

DANIEL NIKOI DJANIE

On what mobile game art can offer artists...

What's behind the new focus on art in mobile gaming?

For years, art was considered as a relatively disposal element to mobile gaming. Now the industry is moving in the direction of more artistic quality. The impact of indie titles and art-driven games such as *Angry Birds*, *Monument Valley* or *Bastion* are in my opinion the reason for this change.

What are the benefits to artists of working in mobile games?

As a newbie you have the chance to work on more different aspects of game art when you work for a mobile company. In AAA production often you'll be stuck in one area, which can be very frustrating if, for example, you only produce the same kind of assets. The production cycles are generally much shorter for mobile games. This way ideas can be tested in shorter time periods, and means there are more opportunities to create new stuff. Often productions can run parallel, which leads to more space for daring projects.

What about downsides?

You're often producing art for the recycle bin. Due to the shorter production cycles, projects are cancelled more often than in AAA game companies. The time pressure in the mobile game industry also leads to compromises regarding the quality in order to achieve the production milestones.

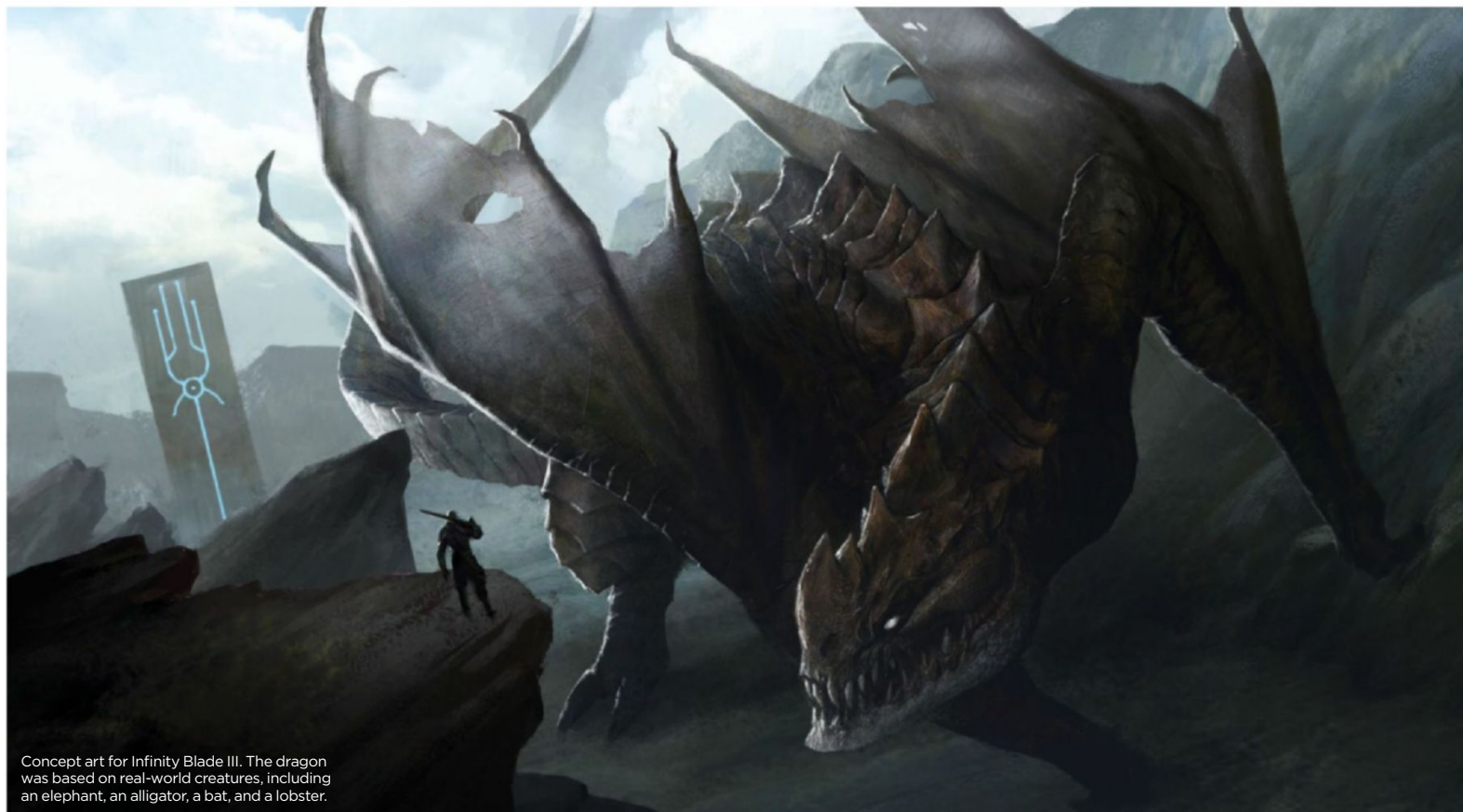
What advice would you give an artist looking to get into the mobile game industry?

Show that you know your skills. Understand that your portfolio is only as good as your weakest work. And show that you're passionate for what you're doing.



Daniel is head of illustration for Gameduell. He previously worked as a freelancing illustrator and animator.

www.gilmec.carbonmade.com



Concept art for Infinity Blade III. The dragon was based on real-world creatures, including an elephant, an alligator, a bat, and a lobster.

➔ Of course, not every mobile game demands high-end art. "The degree of visual splendour depends entirely on the tone and



point of the game you're designing," says Barry Meade, co-founder of Fireproof Studios. "Many titles are successful because of their game mechanics or player involvement or whatever, and aren't art heavy or visually focused – Minecraft being an obvious example. But in specific cases, like our game The Room, the game wouldn't be the same if we didn't go all out to create as fabulous

looking a world as possible. Generally, you can think of great art as a multiplier: it helps to sell things, but without other aspects in place to work with it makes little impact."

A BIGGER COG IN THE MACHINE

Right now, mobile art teams are relatively small. "This means as an artist you're a bigger cog in the machine," says Jack. "Your work is more visible: a lot falls down to you and you also need to be multi-talented. If you want to do more on an art team and have smaller game production cycles, then mobile is a fantastic choice." In comparison, Jack says a

“If you want to do more on an art team and have smaller game production cycles, then mobile is a fantastic choice”



Fireproof's The Room is a physical puzzler, wrapped in a mystery game, inside a beautifully tactile 3D world.

console games role means you'll probably "work longer hours and not make as much as an impact until you're at a senior level."

Of course, there's a flipside to all this. The days when mobile was an easy way into the games industry for the newbie artist are well and truly over. For example, Fireproof mainly recruits experienced artists from AAA companies such as EA/Criterion, says Barry. For Gameduell, meanwhile: "Either you should be a generalist able to combine artistic abilities, technical understanding and a sense for the user experience, or you're a specialist who's outstanding in their artistic field," says Daniel.



Character designs by Daniel Djanie for a circus-themed game that, like many, wasn't made in the end.



Another concept piece from Infinity Blade III, this time featuring a striking-looking warrior in gold.

Wooga, similarly, is looking for the same level of skill and qualifications as if you were applying to one of the big AAA companies, says Jack, adding: "We lean towards the more stylised art style, so coming from a background in cartoons and animations helps greatly."

But it's not all bad news for up-and-coming artists: "Juniors and interns are still invited to join mobile games companies," Jack says. "In fact, some juniors these days know more than some of the old seniors." And with teams in mobile gaming being smaller, such a role offers greater challenges but also, potentially, greater opportunities. Or as he puts it, "You can learn more in mobile – but you need to come in hard and be fast at what you do." 🍷

One step beyond

Bombs away Pixelbomb Games go future-retro with *Beyond Flesh and Blood*, its ambitious third-person shooter that brings one of England's major cities into the mix

Indie game developer Pixelbomb Games is on a mission to put Manchester on the gaming map, starting with its debut third-person shooter, *Beyond Flesh and Blood*.

The game is set in a post-apocalyptic Manchester, after war has savaged the planet. "We wanted to take the whole experience back to the raw and violent style of 80s and 90s action films," reveals art director Steven DeSykes.



"The Pixelbomb Games team is heavily influenced by sci-fi, movies, Japanese anime and related games," explains project leader Lee Blacklock. "So for the feel of *Beyond Flesh and Blood* we looked at a variety of source material," says Steven, "including a huge library of 80s and 90s sci-fi and action movie classics such as *Robocop* and *Terminator*."



The inhabitants of Earth are hostile antagonists, while the player takes the role of one of the imperial survivors who live on a nearby space station, a military force known as the United Global Remnant.

Concept artist Marina Ortega took inspiration from Manchester itself where, she says, "There's a clash of architecture styles: old Victorian buildings coexist with new, almost futuristic architectures." The team drew

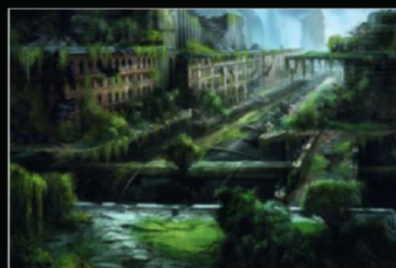


in as much of the city as they could. "If a game is set in the UK, it's a suggestion of London with a few red phone boxes and Big Ben," laments Lee. "It was a challenge to take elements of Manchester and redesign them to be an overgrown wilderness, similar to present-day Chernobyl."

You can get a feel for the game by visiting www.beyondfleshandbloodgame.com.



In the game the player pilots Tactical Combat Frames - the mechs - remotely.



Whether you've been to Manchester or not, you get a real sense of the place in the game.

“It was a challenge to take elements of Manchester and redesign them to be an overgrown wilderness”



Real-world issues influenced *Beyond Flesh and Blood*: dwindling natural resources, overpopulation and global war itself.



My Dell 3007WFP 30-inch monitor has been with me for many years. It still serves me well and doesn't show any signs of needing to be replaced.

I bought a Cintiq 24 HD three years ago, but I've never quite got used to it. However, I do intend to get the Cintiq 27 HD – I'm full of hope for it.



I've always felt the need for a good option for mobile work. This Windows tablet – a Samsung 7 Slate – was a good compromise on the other more expensive and much heavier (at that time) solutions for mobile work, before Wacom brought the Companion into the world.

My working space has to be comfortable, spacious and able to fit all my gear. I have a custom desk with an enhanced table that's wide and deep enough to work comfortably.

My Wacom Companion is a real companion! Finally, a good mobile solution for artists on the move, even if it's just so I can work under the thick shades in the garden unrestricted by power issues.

Svetlin Velinov

Dungeons and dragons The Bulgarian illustrator on why his home studio is his castle – and occasionally his prison



My studio is in my home and my home is my castle. This is a great advantage to me on one hand – and a significant disadvantage to me on the other, because distractions can reduce productivity.

The other risk is that the castle might turn into a dungeon, which is why I try to find a balance by travelling, communicating and taking a rest from my work. When you have a job without specific working hours, you can easily turn into a victim of your own good intentions.

Every artist must express themselves through their work. This only happens when the surrounding environment is in harmony with your personal preferences. In my workplace I've optimised my layout so I have everything within reach of a small movement of my chair. My desk is big enough for all my tech gear, but also has enough space for me to draw with traditional media when I want or need to.

I used a tablet for the first time in 1996, which makes me a bit conservative. Despite the fact I own a whole arsenal of fancy tablets, my favourite is the conventional

Intuos 5 L. This is the one I use the most when I'm in my studio.

For a year now I've owned a Cintiq Companion, which enables me to draw whenever I want. This is a great change for me, because no matter how cozily you've set up your working space, sometimes the isolation is too much and you need to find a safe haven from your castle. The ability to work fulfilling on a mobile device is a big advantage and I recommend it for battling the boredom of the fixed working place.

My 30-inch Dell isn't new, but it's rock solid and serves me very well. It can all be

Artist news, software & events



It's important for me to find time for doodles, as you can see in my pile of sketchbooks. There's always one close to hand.



I've painted a fair bit of art for Magic: the Gathering in my time. Although it doesn't really explain why I've got a card shop expanding in my studio!

This is a souvenir from Magic: the Gathering Grand Prix in Beijing 2014. A box of cards and a dragon – a souvenir bought with my last few yuans at the airport.



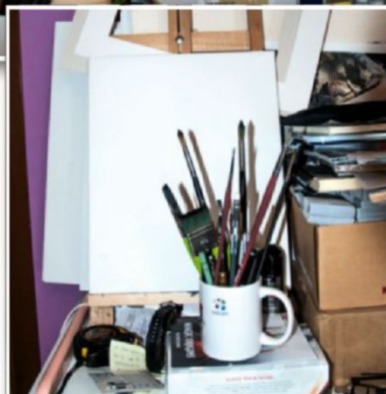
A Behind the Iron Curtain workshop took place in Bucharest, Romania, in 2010. This is a signed card by Kekai Kotaki, who was one of the instructors, along with Stephan Martinière, Mark Goerner and Alex Alvarez.

upgraded, of course, but first I have to finance the replacement of my Cintiq 24 HD. The low resolution, weak backlight and matrix of the monitor, plus the lack of brightness and sharpness of the image, meant I couldn't take full advantage of this otherwise great working tool. I have huge expectations for the new model and hope that soon it will be on my desk.

People who consider their profession to be a vocation are blessed. My work as an

illustrator and concept artist puts me in this category: I have the opportunity to travel all over the world, work on interesting and fun projects, and face a constant challenge to surpass myself, so that I can keep up with the requirements of a constantly changing industry. It makes the job dynamic and keeps me away from routine. Nice, huh?

Svetlin is a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in Bulgaria. You can see more of his work at www.velinov.com.



These folders on my bookshelf may suggest a bit of tidiness in my work, but it's quite a misleading impression.

I have a whiteboard to remind me that I can always find inspiration for painting outside my studio. If the board becomes a painting, a new blank whiteboard takes its place.



lara

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Hatboy

by Vaughn Pinpin



Comics with soul

Seeing double Darren Rawlings and AJ Lieberman team up to launch Doppelgänger Publishing

After starting his career at DC Comics, AJ Lieberman wanted to create his own comics and books. On the way to forming Doppelgänger Publishing, he met artist Darren Rawlings to visualise his ideas.

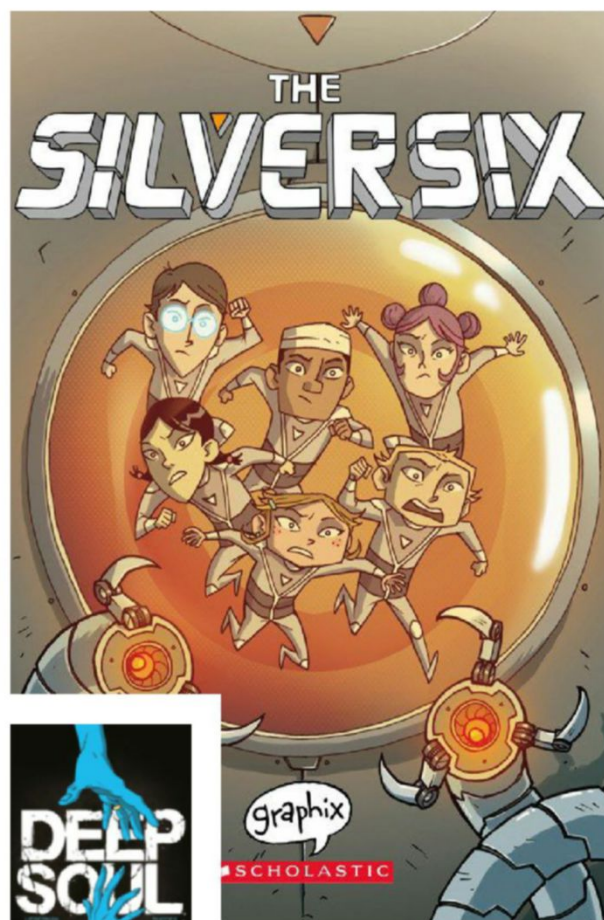
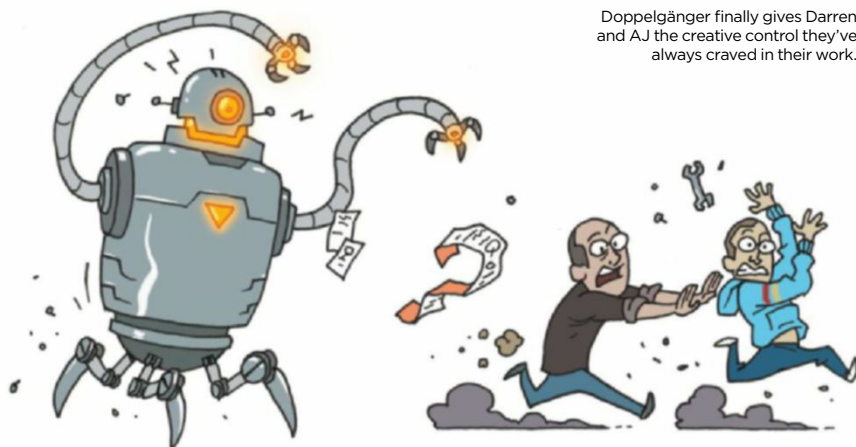
It was while working on their first graphic novel for Scholastic, *The Silver Six*, that AJ and Darren realised they could publish their own books. "Being your own boss and creating the things you want to create is in the heart of every artist," Darren says. "It takes hard work,

dedication and an ability to stay creative when you feel nothing's left. The trick is pressing forward through those creative struggles and sticking to your vision."

Deep Soul is the first book to be released by Doppelgänger. The story, which was drafted by Darren and completed by Tom Rhodes, follows a man struggling to revive his comatose wife. Their second book, *Graveyard Wars*, is already underway.

Doppelgänger is accepting story ideas, so send in your tales and buy *Deep Soul* at www.doppelgangerpublishing.com.

Doppelgänger finally gives Darren and AJ the creative control they've always craved in their work.



Deep Soul is Doppelgänger's first graphic novel.

The Silver Six was made by Darren and AJ for Scholastic.

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact Acting Editor, Beren Neale, on beren@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK



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Getting animated

I've been a reader of this magazine since issue 50. It always inspired me while I was studying animation. Now that I'm working professionally as a digital animator, I particularly enjoy your issues that focus more on the animation industry. Issues 113 and 124 have been some of my favourites thus far, because the insight into other professionals reminds me that no matter how tough the job can be at times, I'm always grateful that I get to explore such a stylistically open realm, such as animation. The constant boost in enthusiasm is always welcome, so I can make the most of my experiences.

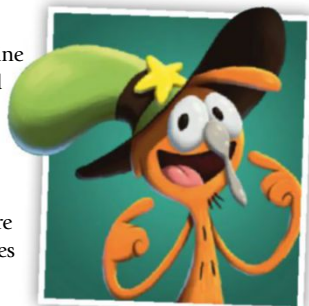
Mark Kil Kelly, Ireland.

Beren replies It's great to get this specific positive feedback from readers. We have loads of fun putting together each issue, but it's important to remember what our readers get excited about. Animation is one of those industries where there's a wealth of transferable skills, so whether you're a storyboarder, illustrator or comic artist, the advice from animation artists is invaluable. We're also looking to make more animation issues, so hopefully you'll stay enthused and inspired for issues to come!

Monster mash!

As a fledgling illustrator fresh out of art school and wanting to do both traditional and digital art, Donglu Yu's approach has helped me view photobashing in a new light. Wanting to paint things from scratch and use reference as a guide, photobashing had always conjured up a bad taste for me. But Donglu's approach in issue 124, with her wanting to paint slightly over the photos to make everything retain a painterly feel, puts my over-thinking mind at ease. I'm mostly a traditional artist with a strength for characters, but this will make my self-taught digital training a breeze.

Izzy Reza, via email



Here's an example of Mark's work for Disney's *Wander over Yonder*.



DID YOU MISS OUR BLACK & WHITE ISSUE? Turn to page 44 for more details on our brilliant issue 126, and others too!



Illustrator Izzy is more than happy to adapt Donglu Yu's photobashing technique into his digital workflow.

Beren replies That's great to hear Izzy! It's an old debate now, but I remember the time where artists disregarded any type of photobashing as somehow not as 'pure' as coming up with an image straight from your imagination. The truth is, Donglu, as so many other artists who feature in the mag, are commercial concept artists. Their need to convey an environment or character quickly means using all tools and techniques to hand. And as you've noticed, there's immense skill involved in doing this to create a unique end result.

On the download

When I found out that Sam Nelson was going to do a workshop for your magazine, I was really looking forward to learning about his methods. I loved what he wrote – very insightful! When I went to download the resource files, it saddened me to see that the files were all such a small resolution and that the PSD had only two layers.

Ever since your magazine switched the resources files online, you started flattening the layers and lowering the resolutions of the Photoshop files. Those files are one of the most important part of your workshops because that's where you get the opportunity to see up close the artist's work and understand their thinking behind it.

So I ask you, could you please stop flattening the PSD files and let them stay at the original high resolution they were when the artist finished it please?

Jeremie Locas, via email

Beren replies Hi Jeremie – thanks for your letter. Just to make a few things clear – we don't flatten any of the PSD files we receive from the artists. We do reduce the resolution, however, for a number of reasons. Primarily, this is to stop redistribution of an artist's work. If we gave out print-ready artwork, it might be sold online as canvas prints from dodgy sites (of course, I'm not for a second saying you'd do this! But some undoubtedly would).

We also drop the resolution to reduce file size, so that the downloads don't become unwieldy. Even when we had DVDs, the art was always reduced in file size so it would fit on a disc. That said, I hope you can find some use for all these great files..



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



Alexander Johanson
@AJohanson89

“I'm blossoming into the creature designer I want to be!”



Kirsty Rollinson
@KJRillustration

“Cthulhu design pencils and inks, rendered in Photoshop and Manga Studio”



Lawrence Mann
@LAWRENCE
canDRAW

“Since this month's issue is about B&W, here's one you'll love!”



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Artist Q&A

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The
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
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panel

Houston Sharp
Houston is a freelance illustrator and concept artist for film and games. He's also a student at Art Center College of Design, in Pasadena, California.
www.houstonsharp.artstation.com

Tony Foti
Freelance illustrator Tony makes art for books, games, magazines and advertisements. His work can be found regularly in Fantasy Flight's Star Wars lines.
www.tonyfotiart.com

Leesha Hannigan
Leesha is an Australian freelance illustrator and concept artist. Her interests lie in fantasy illustration, with a particular focus on creature art.
www.leeshahannigan.com

Mark Molnar
Mark is working as concept and visual development artist for the entertainment industry. He works for international film, game and animation companies.
www.markmolnar.com

Nick Harris
English artist Nick switched to a digital canvas in 2000, after 18 years of using traditional media. Most of his work involves creating artwork for children's books.
www.nickillus.com

Artist Q&A Need our advice?

Email help@imaginefx.com with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!

Using the head as a unit of measurement and comparing natural alignment points throughout the body, we can create a figure that is proportioned correctly.



Question How do I draw human figures with correct proportions?

Bernie Barnes, England

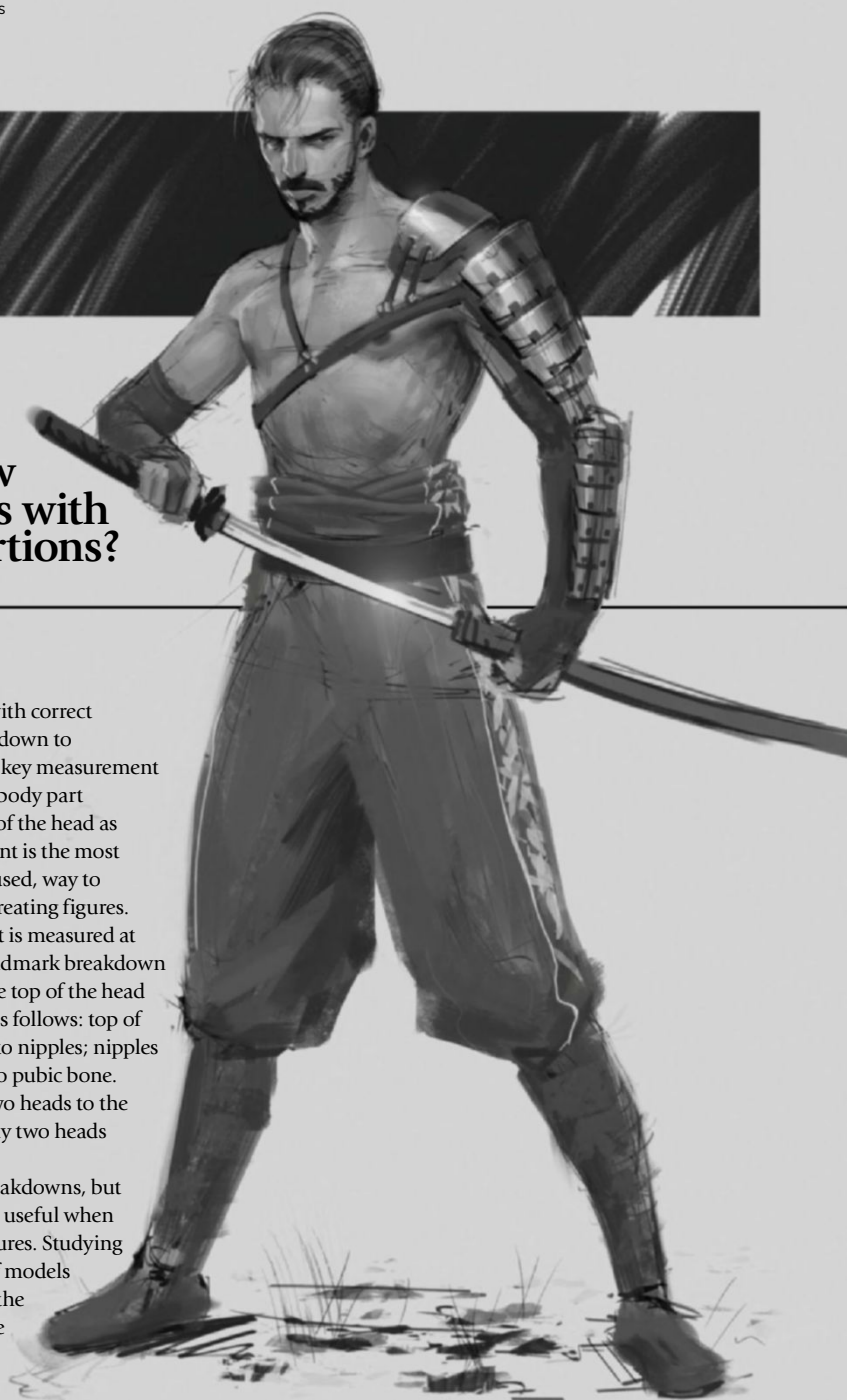
Answer Houston replies



Drawing figures with correct proportions boils down to memorising a few key measurement comparisons and body part alignments. Using the height of the head as a standard unit of measurement is the most useful, and most universally used, way to maintain proportions when creating figures.

The standard human height is measured at about eight heads tall. The landmark breakdown of the torso – starting from the top of the head and moving downwards – is as follows: top of head to bottom of chin; chin to nipples; nipples to belly button; belly button to pubic bone. From there, we move down two heads to the bottom of the knee, and finally two heads more to the soles of the feet.

This is the most basic of breakdowns, but there are many others that are useful when you're inventing your own figures. Studying anatomy books and photos of models in standard standing poses is the best way to learn all of the size comparisons and alignments throughout the body.



Step-by-step: Inventing figures with correct proportions



1 Before sketching, I solidify the pose I want in my imagination. The mind is surprisingly good at recalling realistic proportions. It's how we create normal-looking humans in our dreams. If I can imagine a pose well, sketching it will be just a matter of fine-tuning what's in my mind, using head length measurements.



2 It's good practice to hold off on drawing clothes until after the figure is correctly established. Think of it like building a house: making the outside look nice won't mean anything if the foundation isn't strong and the essential problems haven't been solved yet. If it's a weak structure, the entire thing will collapse.

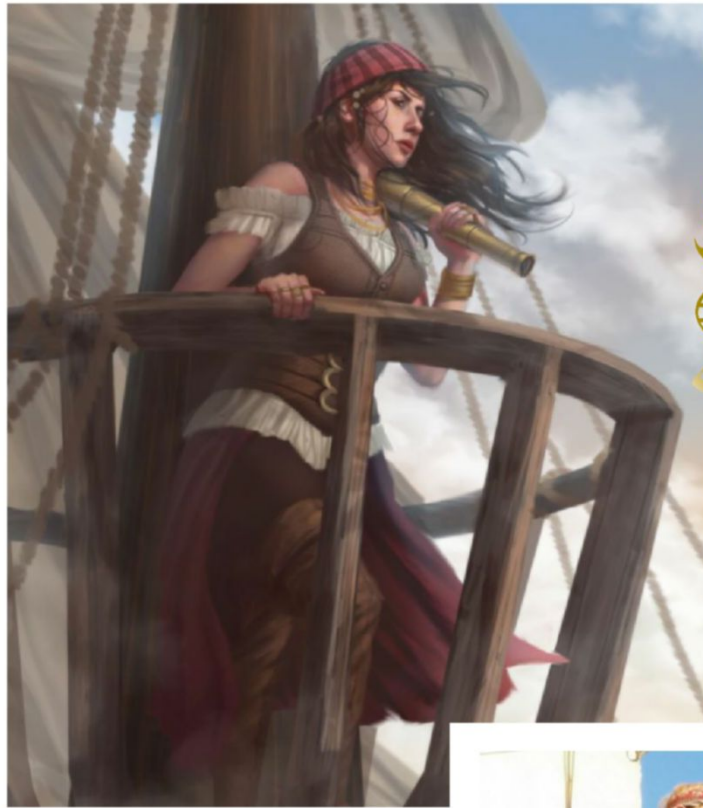


3 Once the problems of proportion and how clothes and armour fit over body parts are solved, you're free to render and detail without worrying if the drawing will be off. Some artists jump to this stage too soon, creating figures that are heavily detailed but with wonky proportions and anatomy. It pays to be patient!

Question

My reference photos end up confusing me – do you have any advice please?

Cal Greenberg, Canada



I find that getting the lighting and pose right are far more important than the costuming. The first two influence the third, but rarely is it the other way around.



Try to focus on the painting, not matching reference. Had I left her hair blonde, for instance, the head would have been too similar in value to the sky and become lost.

Answer Tony replies



Reference photos are important, but if you're not careful they can cause problems of their own. Your first order of business should be to decide what you need and then photograph accordingly.

Before I take the time to get friends together for reference, I usually make a couple of small sketches that roughly define the pose and, if possible, the lighting scheme. It can be tempting to just go outside and shoot photos until you've got something you like (and believe me, I've done it). But there are few things more annoying than thinking you've got the perfect image, sitting down to paint, and realising you have to do the photo shoot all over again because the composition doesn't work with the new pose, lighting and so on. With a little knowledge of lighting, you can even cut and paste your images together for a pose that's more dynamic than what you captured initially.

Once the image is ready, you can use the lighting information in several ways. Obviously, it'll help you to paint the main figure. Whenever I have to make something up (the crow's nest of a pirate ship, in this case) I look for anything with a similar angle and/or texture. When developing the pose from reference, don't get too concerned with matching things exactly. Instead of copying the image, check in with it to get the information correct while you draw the idea in your head.



Artist's secret



USING A STAND-IN If there's a scene element you can't get a hold of (in this case the periscope), have your model hold something similar. You can find reference later on, and to be thorough, take photos in the same setting of something with similar textures.

Question

Please help me depict a scene in heavy, driving rain

Michael Thomas, England

Answer

Houston replies



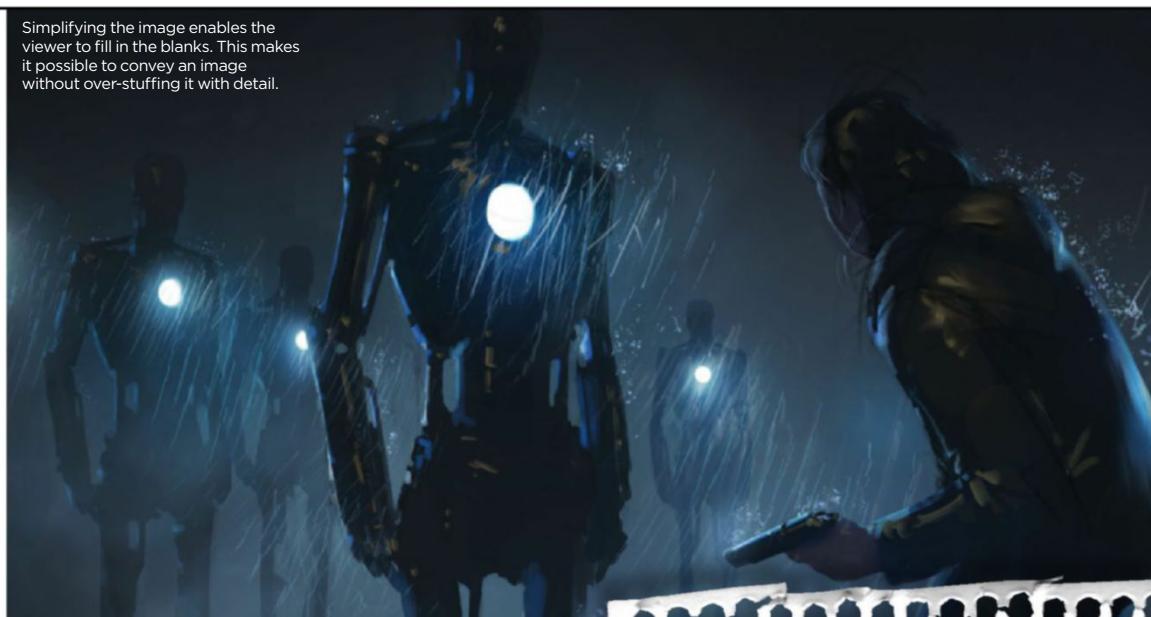
Scenes featuring heavy rain run the risk of becoming too complicated too quickly: countless rain drop details, highlights all over the place, reflections making a mess of the value structure of a scene, and so on. When it comes to depicting a scene with heavy rain, the most important thing to do is to simplify things.

Viewers don't need to have everything spelled out for them to understand what is happening in a picture. We can use this to our advantage when simplifying a rain scene. If we choose specific areas to add detail, the rest of the picture will be filled in by the viewer's imagination.

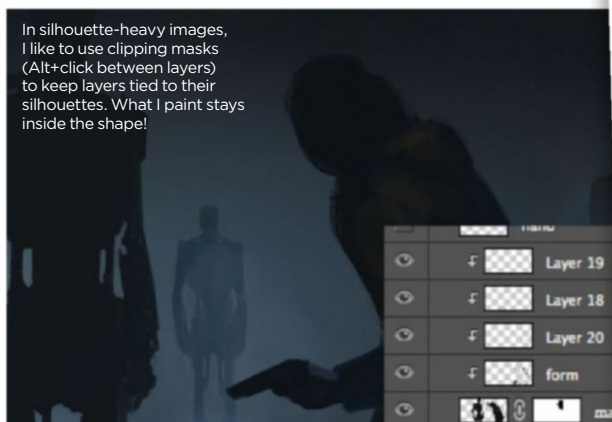
For a night-time rain scene, we can use three things to achieve this: spotlights illuminating a few rain drops, a foggy atmosphere, and sharp specular highlights. Drawing every single rain drop in a scene could make the image too busy and monotonous. By drawing only the raindrops that fall directly in front of strong light sources, the viewer can infer that the rain is falling elsewhere. Heavy rain hitting the ground creates a dense vapour in the atmosphere. Adding this into your image will make the difference between light drizzle and a heavy downpour.

Adding specular highlights on things indicates they are wet. Be careful though – this is very easy to overdo. Choose a few key areas to put them, and avoid the temptation to put them everywhere.

Simplifying the image enables the viewer to fill in the blanks. This makes it possible to convey an image without over-stuffing it with detail.



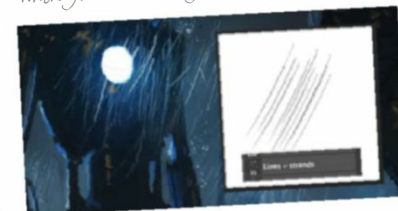
In silhouette-heavy images, I like to use clipping masks (Alt+click between layers) to keep layers tied to their silhouettes. What I paint stays inside the shape!



Artist's secret

LEARN TO BE LAZY

Okay, don't actually be lazy. But be smart. Create custom brushes or tools that make time-consuming things (like raindrops) quicker to produce. Don't waste time painting every drop when you can be lazy... Er, I mean smart!



What sort of monster would he be if he weren't dangerous? Adding large claws or giant fangs are good, but also consider more subtle traits like slippery skin.

Question

My fantasy creatures tend to look static – how can I bring them to life

Heather Wolarsky, US

Answer

Tony replies



There are a few different situations that can lead to a stiff monster image, so I'll try and address each of them here. No matter what you're drawing, the usual root of a problematic pose is a static (or nonexistent) gesture. If you're not starting with some loose gestures, then you're just asking for a stiff creature!

Beyond that, you also need some story behind the character so that it feels relevant to the audience. Story can be something as simple as showing the monster emerging from a lake, which implies there was

something going on before and that there's still something about to happen. Not all monster scenes have to be scary, but if the monster itself is, then you're also going to want some sort of implied threat. It can be massive jaws, crazy claws or bony paws, but something about it should feel dangerous.

You can also use textures to make the beast feel less human. To this end, I'd suggest avoiding a silhouette that reads too much like a normal person. This will indicate to the viewer's subconscious that this strange creature is of unknown origin, and could be dangerous!

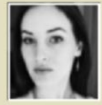
Question

My landscapes look flat. What's the solution?

Rory Niesh, England

Answer

Leesha replies



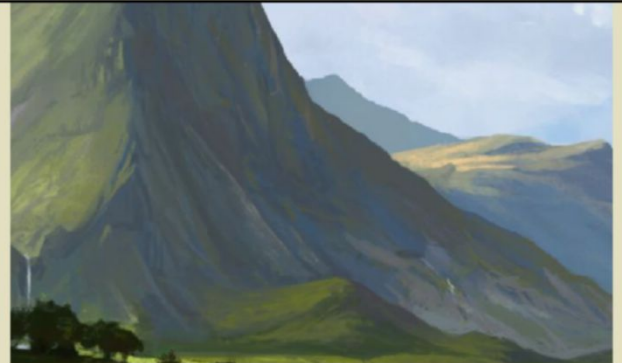
Illustrating the effect of atmospheric perspective will add instant depth to your paintings. There are only a few simple rules to keep in mind.

Essentially, when viewing an object from a distance, certain factors will affect how that object appears. The main factor is light scattering or distribution, which is caused by particles in the air such as dust, humidity or smoke.

A few things will happen to an object the further away it is from the viewer. There are always exceptions to every rule, but for most cases these will apply. The object's contrast and saturation will decrease, and its values will become

higher. The details within a shape will soften, but for 'hard' shapes such as rocks or mountains, their silhouette edges will remain nice and sharp. Distant objects will also shift towards a similar tint as the sky. This can, of course, be any colour you choose: from blue, to orange, to green (hey, alien planets need love, too).

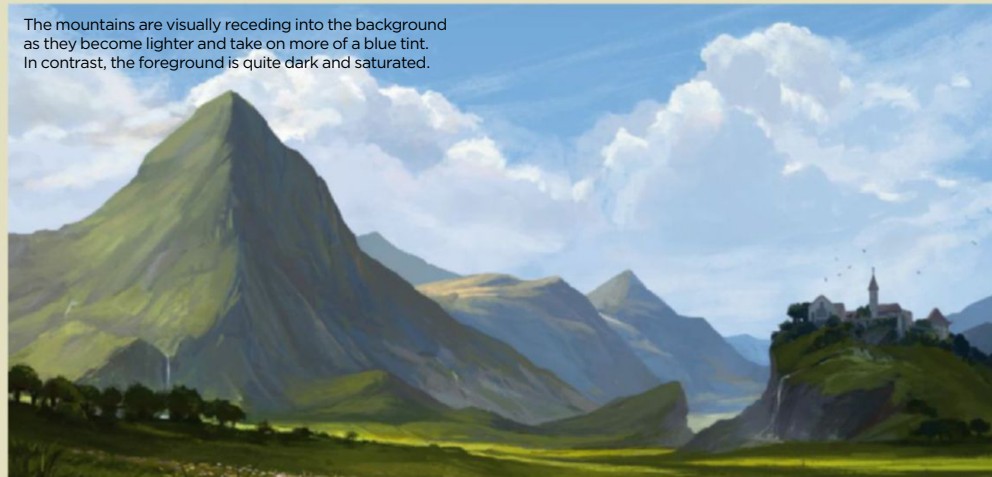
My process for painting atmospheric perspective begins with my initial sketch phase. It's important to lay down your general shapes and colours early on, to ensure that the distance and depth is communicating well. Taking a 'light banding' approach is a great way to emphasise depth in a painting, by consistently layering the lighter areas against darker areas.



Make sure to always keep your value range close when painting details into rocks and mountains, especially when they're further away, because there'll be less contrast.

I usually avoid zooming in and becoming distracted with detail until much later in the painting process. When I begin to add details, I'll often use the Lasso and Quick Selection tools to help preserve any hard edges, especially if I happen to be working on a single layer.

The mountains are visually receding into the background as they become lighter and take on more of a blue tint. In contrast, the foreground is quite dark and saturated.



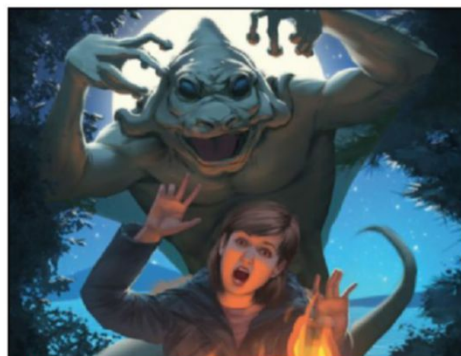
Artist's secret

VALVE YOUR VALVES!

Here's my initial block-in sketch. An easy way to correct the value of a distant object is to subtly paint over it in a lighter colour, with a large soft brush.



Step-by-step: Bring out the beast!



1 Gesture drawing is the foundation on which the whole painting depends, so do it as many times as you need until that scribble becomes a scary monster. Move the shoulders around, lower the head... experiment aplenty. These should be fast and loose so you can crank 'em out.

2 You can use lighting to accentuate the silhouette, which should relay the notion that this thing isn't human. Here I've given him a triangular head, amphibious fingers and the lower body of a snake to hammer it home. Then I back-light both characters so he reads fairly easily.

3 Exaggerate the threat. One of the reasons I've given Slippy here such a large jaw is so he could fit that girl's entire head in his mouth. That's not to say he will (she may have super powers, we don't know until he goes for it), but exaggerating the threat creates more tension.

Question

How can I paint an inanimate object coming to life?

James King, Wales

Answer

Mark replies



I imagine an ancient warrior, rotting in a forest swamp for decades, coming to life to aid his summoner, with help from some kind of dark magic.

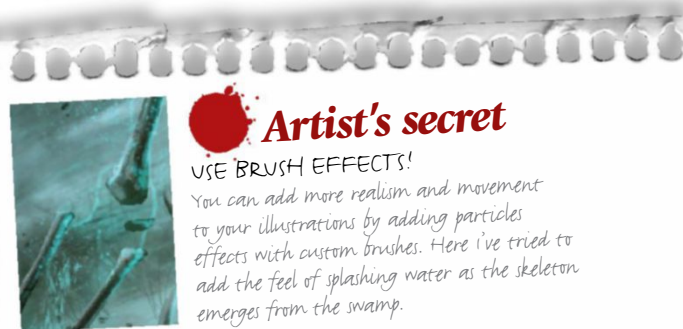
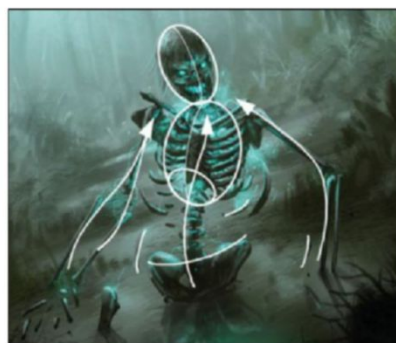
The key for painting something coming to life is to show the process between the two stages. In this case I want to show the skeleton in a relatively dynamic pose, to show that it's alive. But I also want to depict it just before its bone structure has reformed. I decide it could be cool to show the upper part of the skeleton almost complete, but some of the ribs and bones still coming out of the water.

To make the image more dynamic I tilt the horizon line and organise the bones coming out of the water to point towards the most complete part, the upper torso and head. This area became my focal point.

The extra light effects of the dark magic help me to create a tangible face, instead of showing simply holes in the skull – and to have more value contrast around the focal area. I also use these lights to connect the flying bones visually, suggesting where they're going to end up.

I want to depict the skeleton's movement as it reforms from small pieces of bones.

I suggest movement by building shapes around dynamic lines. This also helps with storytelling and directing the viewer towards my focal areas.



Step-by-step: The dead awakens...



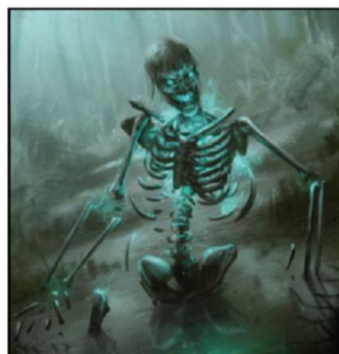
1 I start with some really rough line work, where I block in the main pose of the skeleton as well as the overall composition for the scene. I've done a lot of studies of human skeletons in the past, so I don't take long blocking in the pose this time around. If you aren't sure of the human bone structure, use reference image to better understand the correct anatomy.



2 Next up I fill the background with a mid-green and also add a gradient of grey to suggest the direction of the light. I block in the silhouette of the skeleton with a darker value of the same colour and add some basic shadows to start forming the shapes. I also paint in some foliage, in order to try and get a feel of the forest swamp environment I had in mind.



3 Next I clarify the background more by strengthening the lights and adding more foliage and trees. Then I paint in the lights and shadows of the skeleton using a sub-layer and add some 'magical' light effects on a Color Dodge layer. I tend to use Overlay and Soft Light layers to strengthen the contrast of various parts and normal layers to add more details.



4 I use various texture brushes to quickly suggest more detail in the background and try to give the skeleton itself more painted details. I correct the silhouette of the bones to make them more anatomically correct and paint in all the reflecting lights. As a final step, I add sharper edges and fine details around the head to drive more attention to the focal area.



Question

What should I take into account when painting an icy cavern?

Mark Rogers, Scotland



To show some opposition to the ice, I paint in a rusty, eroded giant robot frozen in the ice that's different in colour palette and material qualities.

Answer

Mark replies



The trickiest part in painting an ice cavern is capturing the unique qualities of the ice itself.

The clean ice almost reacts to light as glass, but in nature the frozen water has a lot of dirt and other organic materials in it that makes it slightly less transparent. This, and the generally uneven surface of the ice, creates the typical cloudy character of the material. In addition, ice varies in appearance, depending on how compressed it is and either how rough or melted and shiny its surface is.

Because the light coming in through the entrance of the cave shapes this whole illustration, I start with a dark base colour and gradually build up the various layers of the ice with 'light'. I used the mix of Overlay, Soft Light and Color Dodge layers to achieve the feel of the scattered lights



Varying your edges can make your painted ice look more realistic. I use sharper edges (1) to show its reflective qualities, blurry soft edges (2) to suggest its transparency and painterly brush marks (3) to depict its rougher surface.

around the illustration. For the highlights and sharper edges of ice shards I use Normal layers and paint within hard selections with the Lasso tool.

Ice is a reflective surface that's also semi-transparent, so what's behind and around the ice is important, too. In this case I try to show the rocks behind the ice and also add warmer reflections of the colours of the industrial robot and mix in greens and turquoise around the entrance, to suggest the warmer outer sunlight.

Question

Please help me give my characters expressive eyes

Aisha Lamont, US



Age, ethnicity and attitude all influence expression and how a character comes across. Hopefully these three each look suspicious in their own way.

Answer

Nick replies

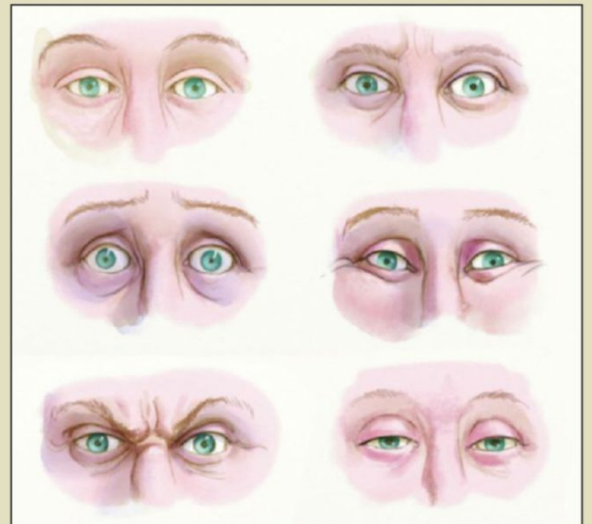


It's human nature to study other people's eyes to read emotions, even in pictures, so they offer a great tool to use in your own imagery. Our instinctive people-watching behaviour means we already have a lifetime of study under our belts. Be conscious of this.

You need to understand that we aren't talking about the eye alone. The rest of the face works in combination for each expression. Eyebrows in particular form an essential part. It also pays to understand something of the way the muscle groups of the face work, and so some study of anatomy books won't hurt.

The combination of expression and body language adds life to a character. Do you throw your head back when you laugh? Thrust your neck forward and glower when angry (with hands on hips)? Look for such things when you're people watching. Make mental or sketch notes when you spot behaviour like this.

Be prepared to work at it to get an expression right. There may only be the width of a line between interest and concern. And of course we all look different too (identical siblings aside), so you'll see endless variations in life, influenced by ethnicity, age and gender. There's endless fun to be had with eyes!



I sketch out these pairs of eyes based on simple circles. As well as eyebrows and wrinkles, don't forget that the pupil size varies according to the light in the scene and your character's mood.

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Question

How would you paint a fungal landscape?

Len Avery, England

Answer

Nick replies



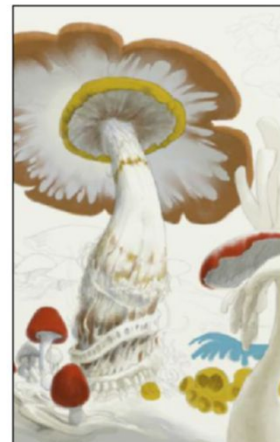
A quick look at the weird and wonderful examples an internet search throws up should fuel any imagination. There's a surprising variety to choose your inspiration from. For this article I go for more recognisable, mushroom shapes to base my composition on, but hope that a low eye-level will suggest an unusual sense of scale. With this in mind I also elect for a portrait format.

I fire up ArtRage and start sketching with the Pencil tool, with the Precise setting toggled on (just my preference). I base the image around a focal mushroom shape with a sort of double cap. An initial idea of lighting is brought in using several layers of watercolour shadows (I set my layers to Multiply blend mode). I go on to introduce some bolder colours, using the Chalk tool, on a couple more layers, just to make them easier for me to edit.

After working at these for a while I feel the need for some sense of background, so I splash some simple colours on layers behind with the Light Pressure Chalk, which is set to Mottled, so as not to make them appear too bland.

The key point about making this work, to my mind, is mostly about making the odd shapes convincingly lit. Get that right and you can paint them just about any colours you want. Mine is a fairly conservative approach that doesn't stray far from colours you'll find in nature. But please do push it any direction you fancy. I keep working at the line, colours and tones until the scene makes some sort of sense.

It's easy to be influenced by iconic images such as Alice in Wonderland, but the amount of reference available online should enable you to stray in all sorts of directions.



I chose a portrait format for this landscape to help emphasise the strangeness, but also to enable me to show the full height of the central mushroom from closer in.

Artist's secret

USE THE ERASER TOOL
Never forget the Eraser as a great tool. As well as a useful correction tool, it's great for working back into any layer. It can make you think in negative shapes as well.



Step-by-step: Paint a giant mushroom



1 A portrait image shows the height of the central fungus best. I draw with the Precise Pencil setting, on a paper with reduced grain size. I work across several layers, merging them later. My pencil work includes some directional shading to help describe form.



2 I add warm watercolour tones on layers set to Multiply, and opaque body colour for selected elements on standard layers using the Chalk tool. I block in background colour values on layers behind: a clear sky and greens and ochres for the ground.



3 I carry on building up values and forms, still relying on Pencil, Chalk, Watercolor and Palette Knife (Blender). The final part is introducing the finishing details, many of which are rendered opaquely on a layer above the rest. Just have fun!

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Artist Portfolio GEOFFREY ERNAULT

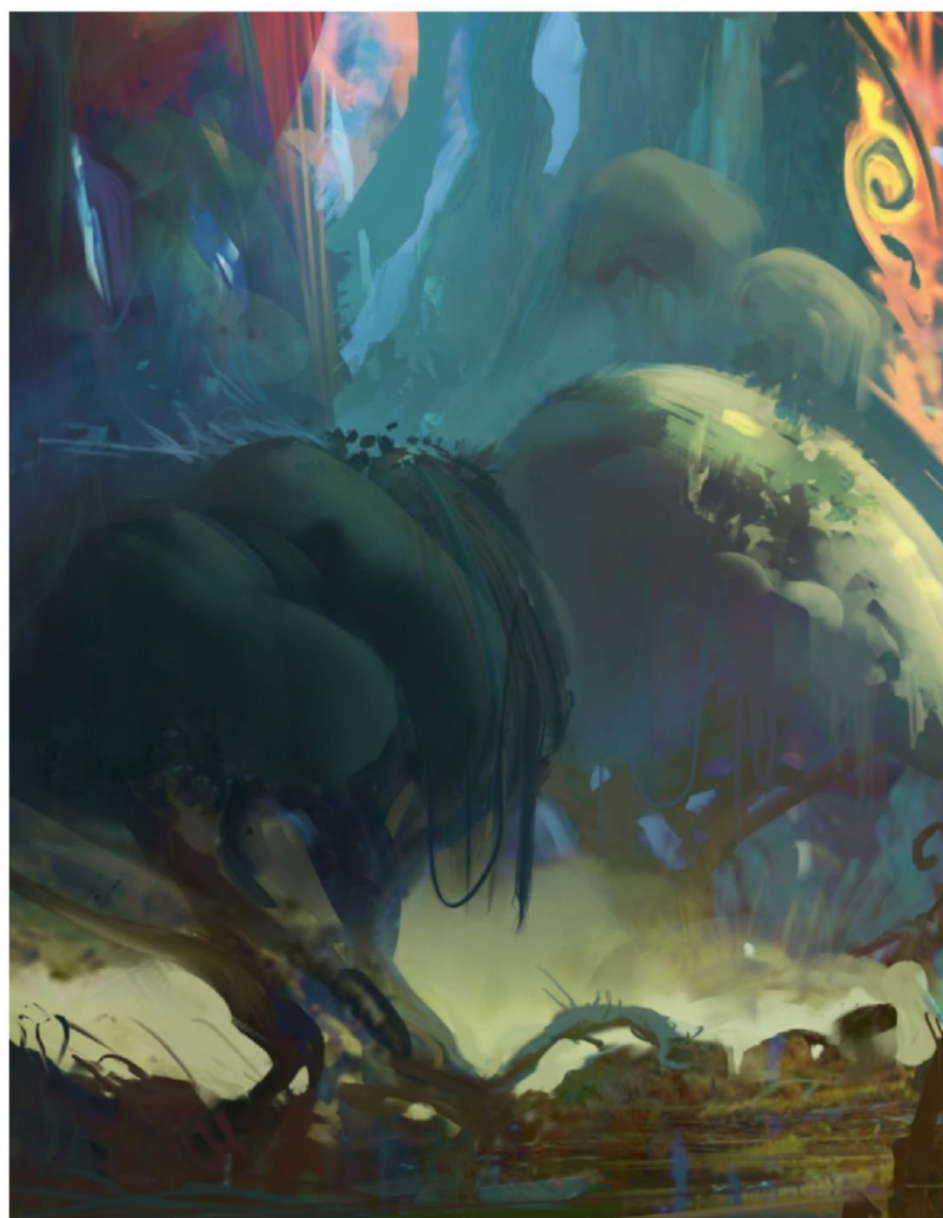
The French concept artist with a lifetime love of sci-fi and gaming is about to embark on a new adventure

When Geoffrey Ernauld was around six years old, he found himself confined to hospital due to an eye injury. For a while, he was effectively blind. "My father was next to me with Star Wars playing on the hospital TV," he remembers. "And he described each scene of the film and what was happening. And during all this I had all these exciting sci-fi images coming through my mind – super-cool spaceship designs, stormtroopers and everything." He smiles at his first real stirrings of artistic creativity. "Then when I saw the movie it was even better!"

Curtain-wipe to 2015, and the now hugely talented artist is preparing to move to the Los Angeles area to join Riot Games as a senior concept artist – following a year's stint at Guerilla Games at its Cambridge office. In between, he's lived in Greece, China, Belgium, Russia and back to his home country of France, all the while

THIS ISN'T MARS

In this personal piece Geoffrey was "practising edges and colours" to produce the atmospheric effect he's so fond of.



honoring his craft for producing fantastically detailed sci-fi landscapes, creatures and many other designs.

"Guerilla was really great," he says of his last job. "The company contacted me to develop a new IP for which it needed someone to figure out the overall look, and to explore options. That IP went on to become RIGS, which Guerrilla announced back in June at E3. It was an amazing experience, because I had a lot more responsibilities. It was on Project Morpheus [Sony's forthcoming virtual reality system], so it meant we had to find ways of creating a good pipeline that would work with the tech, and seeing it evolve was really awesome. I feel like I really learnt a lot."

MORE THAN A GAME

Geoffrey's love of gaming, particularly of the sci-fi kind, also developed at an early age. "When I was about seven, I remember discovering StarCraft at a friend's house," he says. "It was a revelation to me. I fell in love with the universe, the way the game

Artist PROFILE

Geoffrey Ernauld

COUNTRY: US

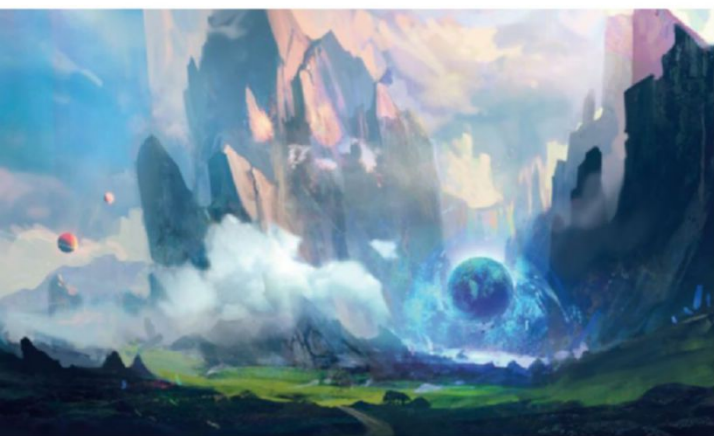
FAVOURITE ARTISTS:
Caspar, David Friedrich, Thom Tenery, Sparth, Luke Mancini, Andrée Wallin

SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop, 3ds Max, Alchemy, ZBrush, Unreal Engine, and more

WEB: www.geoffreyernault.com

played, the massive armies and the designs. I just couldn't stop playing it. I started playing more and more games, mostly Diablo 2, Warcraft III and Earth 2150."

The real breakthrough came on his 16th birthday, when his parents bought him a Wacom tablet. "I was really excited! While looking for tutorials to use it, I realised you could actually paint with a tablet and not just use flat colour. I focused all my attention on that and any free time I'd have, I'd learn new techniques and learn the software at home after school."



WORLD BEARERS

"Having some fun during my lunchbreak, plus a bit of detail after work," says Geoffrey, who developed a complex backstory for this image.



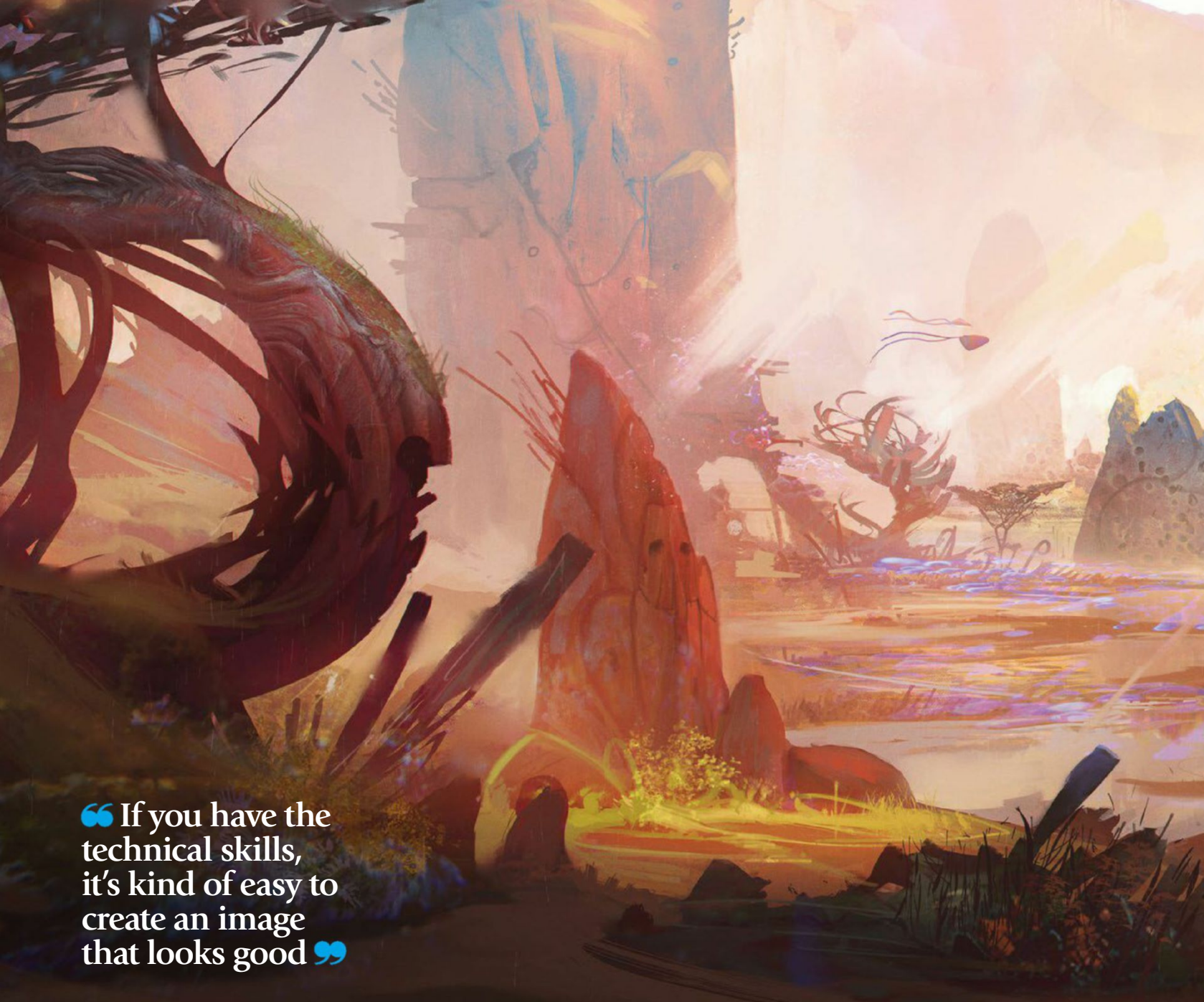


“When I was seven,
I discovered StarCraft at
a friend's house. It was
a revelation to me”



**DIGITAL PAINTING
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*The full tutorial of how
Geoffrey created this
image is contained within
the book itself, published
by 3DTotal.*



“If you have the technical skills, it’s kind of easy to create an image that looks good”

NODEWORLD

An evocative image – which Geoffrey is keeping deliberately unexplained – with hints of Star Wars in the design.

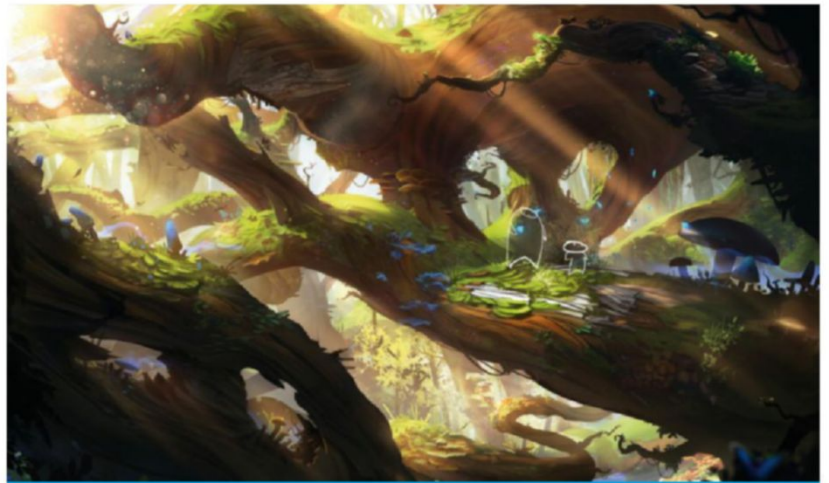


➡ Geoffrey mainly uses Photoshop, along with 3ds Max, ZBrush and the Unreal Engine as projects or whims demand, though he’s always keen to try new software or less-conventional methods of painting. “For example I like using Alchemy or traditional stuff like contour drawing sometimes. I like to experiment with the picture, because you can’t just add a landscape picture to make a speedpainting in an easy way. But what you can do is try to take a picture of something abstract and find a cool way to use it in an image, for a design for example.”

In any of his concept designs, lighting always comes first, followed by composition, shapes and finally the actual design. This is partly due to his love of the Impressionists and the work of Caspar David Friedrich – building a mood just as much as depicting subjects. “I think it’s kind of easy to create an image that looks good,” he says. “If you have the software knowledge and the technical knowledge,

NO MAN'S VALLEY

"I'd been watching a bunch of Chibli stuff, so I went back to colourful subjects for this painting."



THE ADVENTURES OF MARVIN AND GEORGE

A beautifully luminous image inspired by 2D games

Subtitled *Escape from the Forest of Lyess*, this was inspired by Geoffrey's experience of games such as *Rayman Legends*, and *Ori and the Blind Forest*. "I wanted to push myself a bit with stylisation and shapes, as well as mood," he says. "I had been doing a series of practice pieces, where I'd include Marvin (the small white line-art character), to add some life to them."

"I really wanted to try pushing that a bit and see how it might look in an environment similar to those games. At first I wasn't entirely sure what

I wanted to go for, but as I kept developing the image, I went for a moody forest that the characters could explore. Simple, with mostly trees, but with highlights of colours and controlled lighting to guide the eye."

"I wanted to show something that could be dangerous – lots of height, gnarly tree shapes, poisonous mushrooms – but depict it in a way that makes it look pretty. It's been a recurring theme for me for a while. I love taking something scary or freaky and painting it in an appealing way."

you can do something that looks good, with a lot of detail. But I really like the Impressionists because they can convey a mood using such good use of brush strokes. They don't need to detail everything because there's mystery. You have to play with your imagination a bit and I think it just makes the images better."

GLOBAL VIEW

His travels around the globe – first with his family growing up, and later for his career – have also contributed much to his artistic worldview. "I feel like being abroad boosts my creativity and makes me enjoy life more, as I'm constantly discovering new things, learning new languages, discovering cultures. "So when you go to Russia and everything is super-grey and there's a blizzard and it's cold and you have big, almost very greyish buildings. Then you go to Greece and you have sand everywhere, it's hot. Every time I would just leave everything behind and just start all over."

THE FALL

This was designed for the game Kerbal Space Program and created with 3ds Max, ZBrush and Photoshop.



Indeed, while Geoffrey studied at the prestigious L'Institut Supérieur des Arts Appliqués art school, and has taught art courses himself, he's a big believer in getting out there and getting on with it. "Even in France, I don't think there's a lot of schools that teach concept art. They tell you about speedpainting or Photoshop. But they don't give you a real-life experience. You don't know how it feels to work freelance for a client, being paid badly, but you do it for the CV. You have to go through this stage. People don't realise that."

Now LA, and the next chapter in Geoffrey's adventure, awaits. He's eager to get started once again. "Serge Birault said art is like a drug. It feels sometimes more like a curse – if you don't paint, you feel bad. And the worst thing is if you finish an image, even if you like it for 10 minutes, afterwards you're going to hate it because you are going to think about all the things that you could have corrected!" he laughs. "I guess it's not about being perfect. I think we're all seeking the feeling of being content with what we're doing."

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Starting with Charlie Bowater's striking cover, our monochrome special features 10 key artists who thrive on limitations. Elsewhere, Sara Forlenza paints a historical drama, Brian Matyas mixes 3D and 2D, Patrick J Jones uses charcoal and we talk to Forest Rogers.



Issue 125

September 2015

Our illustration special includes 10 of the most unique artists working today, Game of Thrones art, with Andrew Theophilopoulos painting Cersei Lannister in a new light, Donato Giancola depicting a key scene from Tolkien's The Silmarillion, and much more.



Issue 124

August 2015

Oscar-nominated Disney animator Aaron Blaise explains animation's 12 principles, In-Ah Roediger tells us what it's really like to work in the industry, and six pros reveal how to break in. Plus inspiring tutorials on character design and establishing a mood with colour.



Issue 123

July 2015

Cris Delara paints our pin-up cover star, while a double-sided poster features art from Loopydave and Fiona Stephenson. Julie Dillon and Serge Birault (think octopuses and women in rubber) add their spin, and we learn about intriguing artist and model Zoë Mozert.

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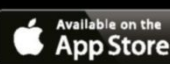


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STUDIO PROFILE

WOOGA

A respect for its creative staff has seen this mobile games studio thrive

The world of mobile games development may be incredibly competitive, yet Wooga has quietly established itself as a major success story since being founded in 2009 in Berlin, where it's still based. Rather than spending millions on lavish television advertising campaigns featuring unrealistic CG, the company prefers to concentrate on making the best games it can. And nurturing the creative talent within its 250-plus staff spread over 40 countries.

Wooga's titles include the likes of Jelly Splash, Pearl's Peril, Diamond Dash and most recent success Agent Alice, across a variety of platforms including iOS, Android and Facebook. "Our business is centred around being able to sustainably produce hit games,"

“There are a large amount of projects being worked on at any one time”



explains Jens Begemann, CEO and co-founder. "In the past five years we've had five hit games and our development approach is designed to foster the development of more." Indeed, the studio employs what it calls a 'hit filter', starting with many different prototypes and gradually whittling them down so that only the best ideas remain on the table.

Obviously the art department makes up a major proportion of its staff, with around



60 artists currently on board. Nick Martinelli, head of art, reveals that, "There are a large amount of projects being worked on at any one



The musical viking and the colourful archer are two prototype designs for a game that may - or may not - be developed.

LOCATION: Berlin, with a small satellite office in Tokyo

PROJECTS: Agent Alice, Crazy Kings, Pearl's Peril

OTHER PROJECTS: Toby, Diamond Dash, Bubble Island, Pocket Village, Monster World, Jelly Splash

WEB: www.wooga.com



Some of the many Woogans doing their thing at the main Berlin office, watched on by game characters.



Wooga artist Steffi Schütze pictured working on a character from Agent Alice.



A background scene from Pearl's Peril, which is filled with hidden objects to find.



time, so those people can switch between studio or project on a semi-regular basis depending on what's needed." Although most of the artists are full time, there are a sprinkling of regular freelancers who help out with specialist tasks when needed.

"Artists here have a lot of freedom," says Nick. "They're able and expected to give a lot of creative input into the projects they work on, but with that also comes a certain level of responsibility that I think is a good challenge."

"With that in mind, we're very fussy with the artists we hire! We look for people who can bring a lot of energy and talent to the table, and we'd rather hire a very talented

junior artist than someone who perhaps has more experience but isn't as talented."

Lead artist Nikita Fedorenko relishes this freedom when it comes to creating concepts



for new projects. "Depending on the timeline of the project, and which phase it is in, it's possible to bring some of those ideas to life and include them in the project," he says. "The ones we don't use are archived to use in the next project or at a later stage of production."

PLAYER FEEDBACK COUNTS

He adds that fan feedback is a vital part of development, with many players being particularly passionate about what they do and don't like. "For instance, we had a protagonist drawn up and finished in a previous game, but users really didn't warm to her," he says. "We tried redesigning her whole outfit, every detail you could imagine, but it just didn't work. In the end we switched her with the sidekick – and found our leading lady."

Creating games that need to run on a huge amount of different devices, all with different capabilities, is a design challenge. "Other than the hardware itself, a limitation for the art part of the game is screen size," says Nikita. "It's important to not only make a game look good, but be clearly readable on as many devices as possible. So we're doing a lot of work and testing in this direction."

“We look for people who can bring a lot of energy and talent to the table”

Designs for Pocket Village, Wooga's early Facebook game that's just coming to an end.



Agent Alice is another game of the type that has become so popular on mobile: hidden-object finding.



Although specific art teams are assigned to each project, there's plenty of scope for other artists to get involved with their own ideas, says Jack Gilson, lead artist. "Live games are constantly updated with new features and art, so your input could always help a new game as it continues to flourish."



"There are also expert panels that all add their input to a game during its development process. So if you're part of a different team there's no reason why you can't talk to the project leader or the lead artist during a show and tell session, or over an office beer in the evening."

The studio also allocates a set training budget to every team member, who is then free to spend it however they like to improve their skills. "Wooga is constantly organising in-house workshops, expert lectures and 'brown bag' sessions where employees can share their learning with each other," Jack says. "There's a big focus on sharing here and you can learn a lot by just showing up."

It's this sort of friendly collaboration which has clearly contributed to Wooga's ongoing success – and with the company constantly looking to bring in new creative talent among younger artists, that looks set to continue for a long time to come.

More concept art for a possible forthcoming game, currently at the development stage.

Find out more about the rise of mobile game art on page 20!

SILVER SAAREMÄEL

One of Wooga's newest lead artists on life at the company

How did you end up at Wooga?

There's a trend going on where AAA developers are flocking to indies and mobile-game studios, and I was no different. Mobile games are getting more competitive by the month, constantly more beautiful with the new hardware, and can reach a billion people. That's a pretty exciting challenge.

What are you working on right now?

Wooga has several studios inside it, each representing a different segment in the games market, and each studio has several game teams working on games from prototypes to productions. I'm in the core games studio, where we concentrate on a deep gameplay experience and a high-quality visual experience. Just within the brief time of a year I've worked on games ranging from epic fantasy strategy games, to Renaissance empire-builders and steampunk viking battlers.

What's a typical day for you?

I usually start the morning with feedback and art direction overpaints, or writing briefs for new assignments. I try to get all my meetings in before lunch as well. After lunch I do my darndest to find hours to paint concepts, while tackling the occasional feedback session.

What's been the best part of the job to date?

The mobile games industry is very dynamic and constantly innovating itself. It's a lot of fun trying to keep up with the market and outdo it at the same time. But most of all, I enjoy the tremendous amount of effort that the company founders and studio heads are putting into transparency. We're constantly updated to the state of the company, what each studio is doing, why we are doing it and where we're headed in the future. We're also constantly in an open discussion about what we've done wrong, what we've done well and where can we grow sensibly. It's a very accepting and pro-active environment that's not afraid to try out new things.

What's your own best advice for someone looking to get into a similar sort of job?

It's fairly simple really. You need a portfolio that's up to par with industry standards. If your portfolio looks as good as the guys who did District 9 or Frozen, then you're bound to get to the studio of your choosing. Art directors are looking for people who can deliver solid art first, and innovation second.



Silver joined Wooga in 2014. He was previously a senior concept artist at Crytek Frankfurt and "dabbled" at Jagex in Cambridge.

www.sept13.deviantart.com

Dan Howard

The illustrator opens up his sketchbook to reveal floating trees, horned women and mutant turtles

Artist PROFILE

Dan Howard

COUNTRY: US



Freelance concept artist and illustrator in Los Angeles, California. Past work includes Ubisoft, Rocket Games, Gaia Interactive, Chocobabs and more.

www.danhowardart.com

BIKER

"This is the basic idea of how I work. A few thumbnails to give ideas of where I want to go. From there, I tighten up the sketch as much as possible."



ENVIRONMENTAL

"An environment idea. I sketch these in lines first then go in and do a black and white mood exploration. From there I add colour on top. These are relatively small and quick."



HORNS TWIST

"More tight sketches as well as some random ideas and gestures."



"Not every idea is gold, so some days I draw familiar characters just to stay in shape"



SHAPES

"Not every idea is gold, so some days I draw familiar characters just to stay in shape, so to speak, and get something drawn."



RED SONJA

"Random sketches and a Red Sonja. I'll do small black and white studies as well to explore lighting and mood ideas."



Sketchbook

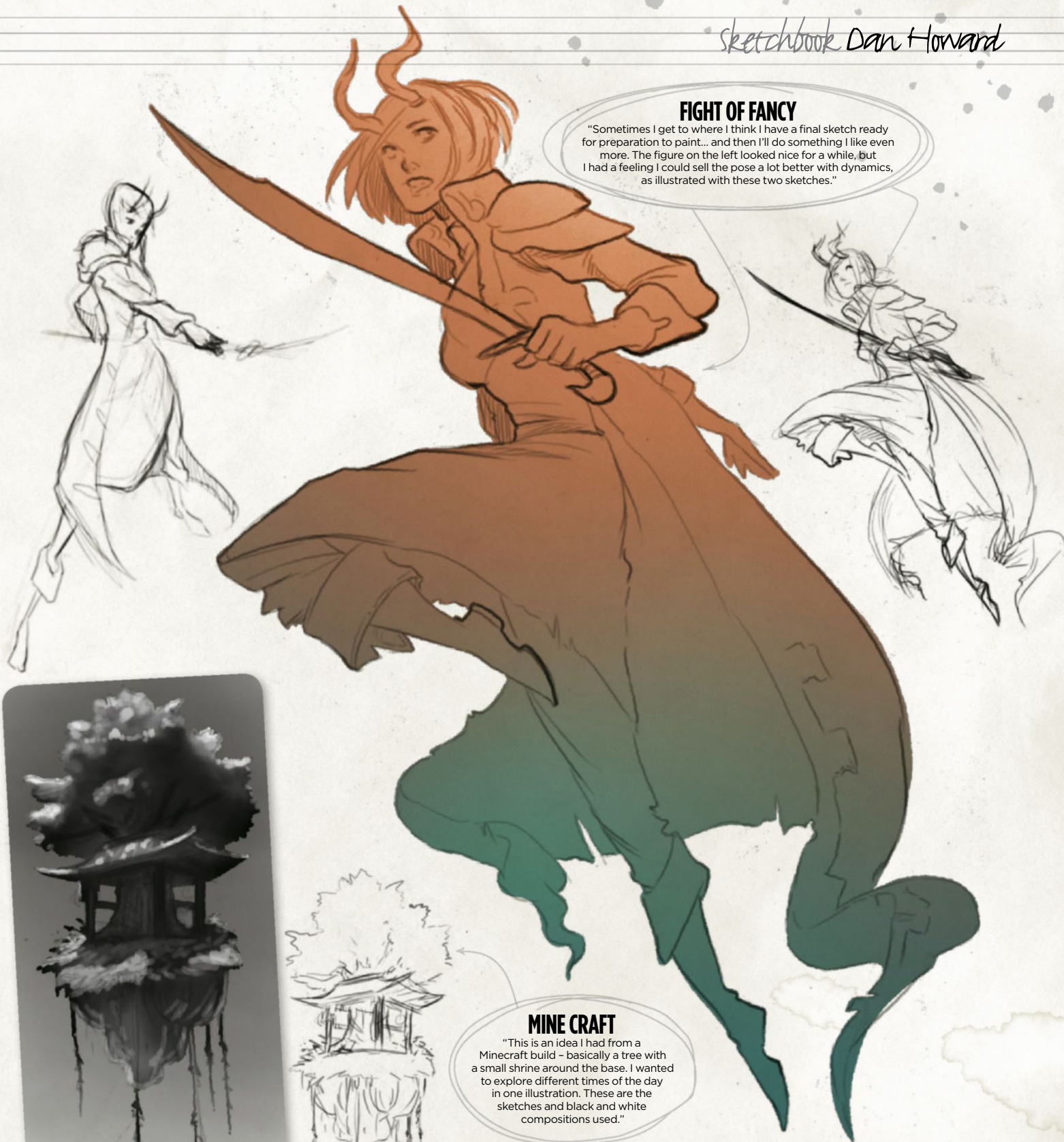


MUTANTS

"The rough gestures, sketches and final lines for two of the four Ninja Turtles I decided to 're-design' for a bit of fun."

FIGHT OF FANCY

"Sometimes I get to where I think I have a final sketch ready for preparation to paint... and then I'll do something I like even more. The figure on the left looked nice for a while, but I had a feeling I could sell the pose a lot better with dynamics, as illustrated with these two sketches."



MINE CRAFT

"This is an idea I had from a Minecraft build - basically a tree with a small shrine around the base. I wanted to explore different times of the day in one illustration. These are the sketches and black and white compositions used."

"I wanted to explore different times of the day in just the one illustration"

Want to share your sketches? Email us with a selection of your artwork, to sketchbook@imaginefx.com

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are available...**

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Advice from the world's best artists

56



This issue:

56 Reimagine a video game character

Even Mehl Amundsen paints a battle-hardened Link from Legend of Zelda.

62 How to work like a games artist

From speed painting to rejected designs, Remko Troost on video game art.

68 Depict a derelict environment

Elliott Lilly talks you through how to excel at an art test.

73 Controlling colours in Krita

Understand Color Selectors, with Katarzyna Oleska.

74 Use a limited colour palette

Matt Gaser keeps a tight rein on his colours.

78 Paint a dragon with personality

Manuel Castañón shares his process for depicting an original dragon.

80 How to design a unique species

Ilya Golitsyn asks "why?" as he illustrates amphibians.

86 Create a video game boss character

Jie Gao utilises lighting techniques and colouring methods for his game art.

74



78



86



Photoshop

REIMAGINE A VIDEO GAME CHARACTER

Even Mehl Amundsen takes the iconic Link, of The Legend of Zelda fame, and updates his look while remaining true to his gaming origins

Artist PROFILE

Even Mehl Amundsen

COUNTRY:
Czech Republic



Norway's Even has studied art in Oslo and Falmouth,

England, worked for Canada's Volta games studio for three years, and he now freelances from Prague.

<http://ifxm.ag/evenma>

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!

Shortcuts Switch Lassos

Alt (PC & Mac)

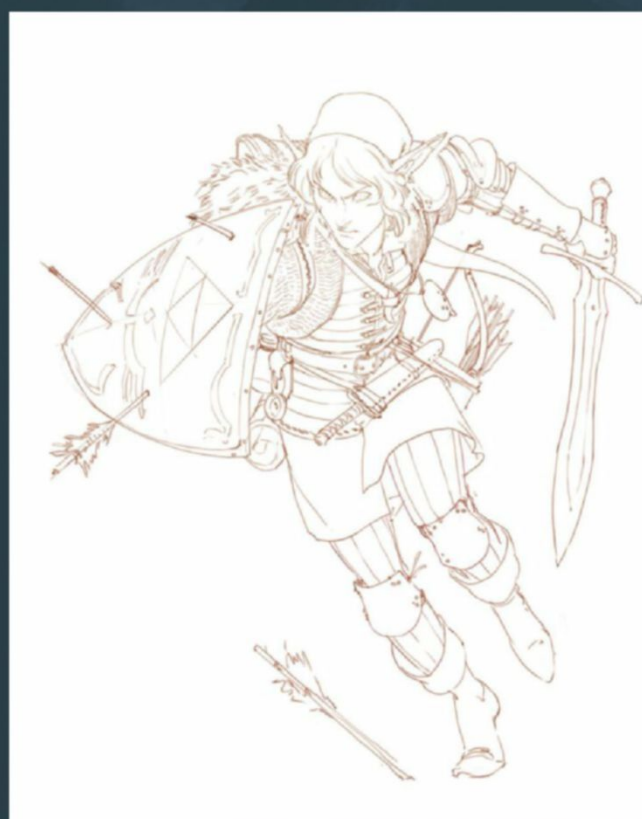
Pressing and holding Alt after setting a first point with the Polygonal Lasso tool enables you to lasso freehand.

The idea for this piece is to try and flesh out the character of Link and get a look at what he would look like in a gruffer, starker reality.

Because Link is used as somewhat of an avatar for the player in Nintendo's classic The Legend of Zelda, and is mute most of the time, it's hard to get under his skin. So I also want to try and imbue the character with some aspects of personality that make good sense to me.

I really want to make my Link stand out from other versions that I've seen. So on top of his usual equipment I plan to take some inspiration from old games and comics, and make him the adventurer I have in my head. To do this, I'll try to apply details that will develop the character: for example, his armour and weather-beaten face. For this workshop I'll take you through a step-by-step explanation of my process, and give you some tips and ideas on how I work.

In treating Link as a piece of character art, a lot of elements are already set because there are certain elements that need to be on the character, and so from that standpoint I'm a little limited. But I can play around with his arms and armour, as well as posing and lighting. So, focusing on these, I try to add enough differences between earlier versions of Link and my own, without straying so far off that he wouldn't be recognisable to gamers as their Hero of Time.



1 Getting the ideas out

After talking it through with the guys at ImagineFX, we land on doing Link as a character-centric piece. So I begin by working up some interesting line sketches to get my ideas down. I do three iterations, working with the idea of drama being the greatest in the moment right before, or right after, impact – as it leaves the mind some room to play. So here is Link: charging and dodging, having kicked some arse.

2 Tightening up the lines

We choose the first sketch and after a few alterations to his pose, I tighten up the line work – I like to work with clean lines. This is also a good chance to put in some details on the character. In addition to Link's normal gear, I figure he would probably keep the sword from his childhood, even if it only serves as a dagger.

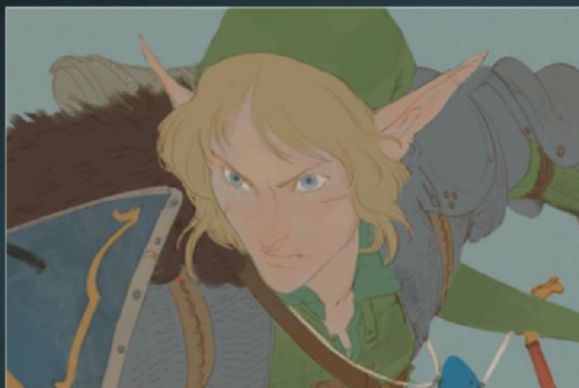




PRO SECRETS

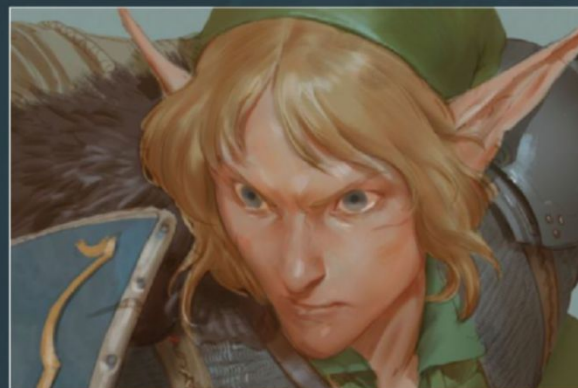
Taking breaks

I usually try and take a break every other hour, to stretch my legs and hands out, which is good for preventing tendonitis or cramps. It's also a good idea to switch up your grip when drawing and painting, for the same reasons. It can be very helpful to find other ways to hold your stylus, as you would with classic painting and drawing.



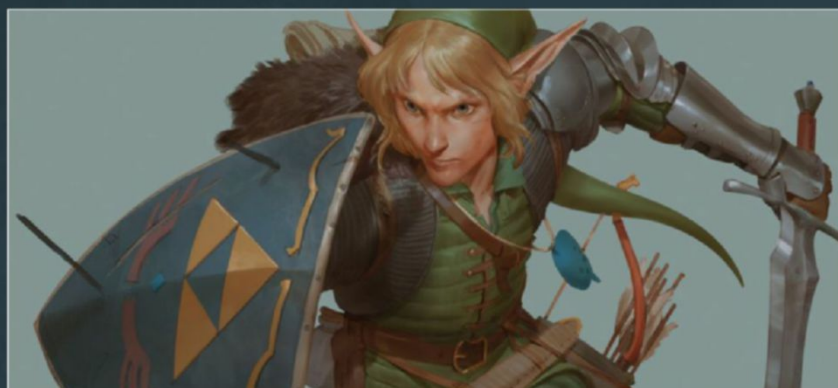
3 Putting colours down

Working on character art in particular, I like to break my process down into individual problems that are fairly easy to solve. I focus on getting them right one by one. Lines done, I lay down flat colours, not thinking much about anything else other than getting a palette that works for the character – although the palette for Link is mostly already defined.



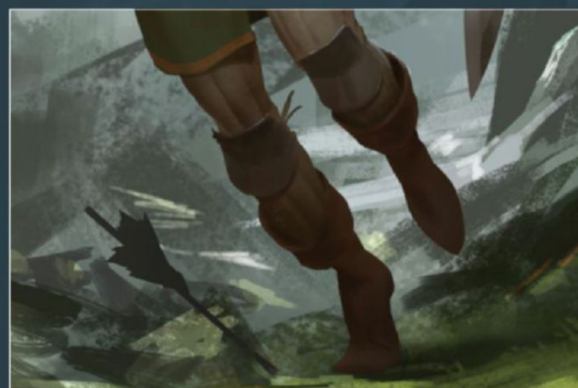
4 Working up the shapes

I want to define some shapes, starting with larger ones and moving down to the smaller one. I do this using a Hard Light layer, and painting in my dark values with warmer hues and lighter values with a less-saturated, cooler hue. I concentrate on shapes reading correctly, and try not to worry much about details at this point.



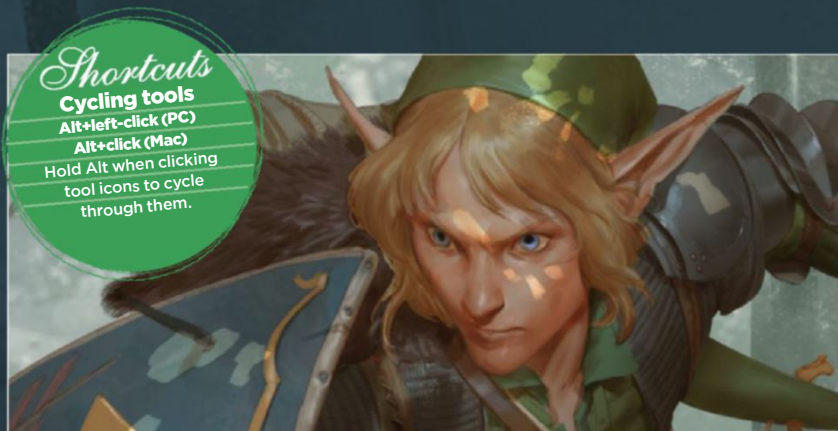
5 Laying in more values

After the first value pass is complete, I go in with a Multiply layer to generate more definition, and try and push the character towards a value read I find appealing. Again I paint with warmer hues. I also attach a white layer over the flat colours from earlier, that I toggle on and off, to get a second read on how my values are working.



6 Adding the background

Now the character is coming into its own, he needs some context. I want something that will be pretty loose and not take attention away from the main character, but that will still add something to the piece. I decide on a woodland landscape – familiar stomping ground for our hero. I love the idea of him sprinting through the forest, taking on an unseen foe.



Shortcuts

Cycling tools

Alt+left-click (PC)

Alt+click (Mac)

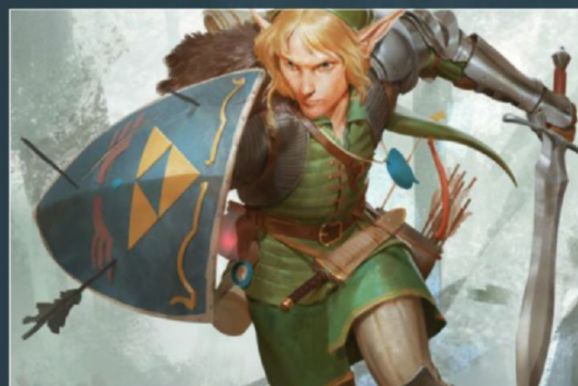
Hold Alt when clicking tool icons to cycle through them.

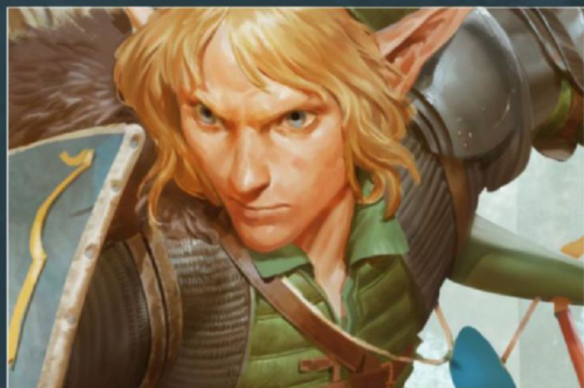
7 It's dark in the woods

Initially the idea is for light to be coming through the foliage hitting Link sporadically, with a dappled effect. But the ImagineFX team decides against this approach as it makes it difficult to achieve a good, dramatic read on the image and results in the piece feeling too mellow. Instead, the idea is that Link has just passed into a clearing to engage some enemies.

8 Let it be bright!

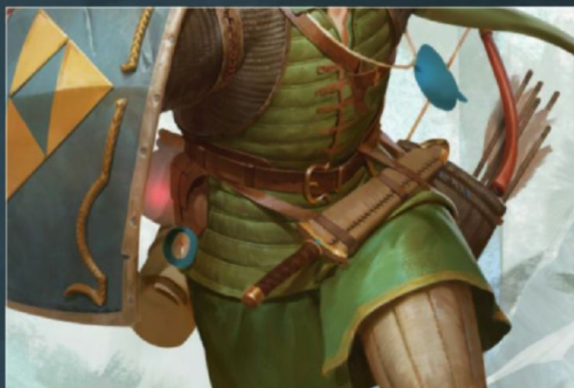
I brighten the piece, using a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer and attaching a Layer Mask to it, so I can brush the adjustments in but leave key areas as they are. There are a myriad ways of doing this and the best approach depends largely on the lighting situation, so it's always worth exploring different solutions – you might even find new techniques!





9 Adjusting the palette

Now that the lighting is sorted out, I need to go back and give the colours some revision, because they've become a little desaturated in the brightening process. I use a Color Balance layer, adding more warmth back into the shadows and giving the whole piece a little warmer overtone. I also do the first rendering passes on foreground and background.



10 Bringing in the details

Now that everything else is nailed down, I start on details. I define the objects, ensuring different materials read correctly. This takes a lot of time and a good bit of use from the Lasso tool, which generates some clean selections that I can paint within, making sure I keep my edges. I use the Pen tool for specific selections that are too intricate for the Lasso.



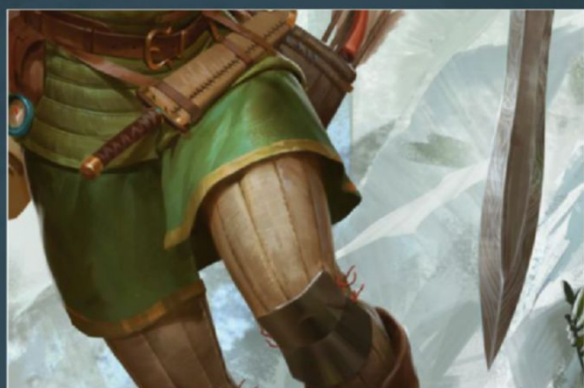
11 Weathering pass

I add hints of wear and tear to the character, although I don't want to do too much. I add some dings to his armour and mess his shield up a little. I add some patterning to the sword, to imbue it with a little real-life magic, because the patterning is that of Damascus steel, which I think is appropriate.



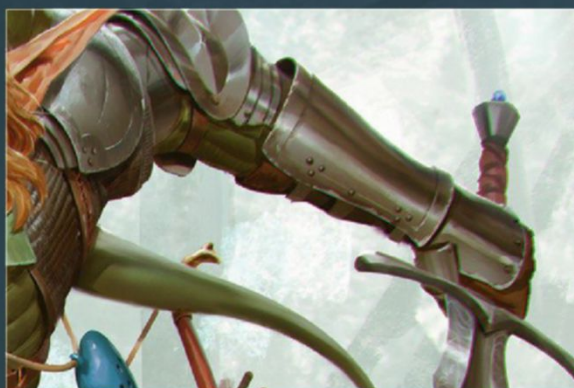
12 Spit polishing

I leave the image alone for a few hours, to let my eyes rest and then come back with fresh ones. I'm not thrilled with the face: while it serves the purpose it feels a little impersonal – it's not quite emotional enough. So I give it another pass, add a little life, a little anger to it.



13 Losing edges

Sharp edges in the wrong places can easily lead the eye somewhere you don't want it to go. I go around the edges with the Smudge tool and a Scatter Brush, scattering edges, then smoothing them out again with a Smudge-Round brush combination. I also use the Mixer Brush tool, to bring some colours from the environment on to Link.



14 Adding filters

At the end, I add a filter or two, to pop a few things. With the noise filter I add a small amount of noise, to make the image easier to look at. Next, I go into Lens Corrections, under Filters, then to Custom bar and play with the Chromatic Aberration sliders, to get some vibrance along the highlights and edge-lights. That's all folks! 🍷

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: AUFGENOMMENER PINSEL 1

This slightly textured chalk-style brush is my go-to tool for most painting needs. It's very versatile.

SUBTLE COLOR RANDOMIZER

This brush can be used for some subtle colour variation, but in this workshop I used it to obliterate edges.

CHAINMAIL

I seldom use specific texture brushes, but chainmail I will use, and this one does the job quite well.

ROUND HARD 70 1

The old Round brush can pretty much be used for anything, though here it was used for lines.

PRO SECRETS

From general to specifics

Always try to work from general shapes and elements to specific ones, at least when doing work other people will have final say over, as this will save you a lot of trouble in the later stages of a piece. In addition, breaking any problem down into steps that you can manage will make it a lot easier for you to organise the complex elements of an illustration. To sum up, planning prevents poor performance!

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Artist insight

GEAR UP YOUR GAME CHARACTERS

Concept artist **Remko Troost** reveals how he creates character assets for games including Assassin's Creed Unity and the upcoming For Honor

Artist PROFILE

Remko Troost
COUNTRY: Canada



Remko is a senior concept artist at Ubisoft Montreal,

where he's created characters for Far Cry 3 and Assassin's Creed. As a freelancer he's worked for clients such as Paizo Publishing, Applibot and Mokko Studios.
www.pandraw.com

Often when trying to land a job as a concept artist in the film or video game industry we concentrate on art sets. Of course, skills and understanding what you see play an important role in our work, but there can also be a lot of discussion between several people in the production process. You'll have to find

solutions to constraints and needs that come from different departments and directors. Your art may have to fit the gameplay, story, animation and creative vision, all at the same time. A lot of decision taking and breaking happens before the final art goes public.

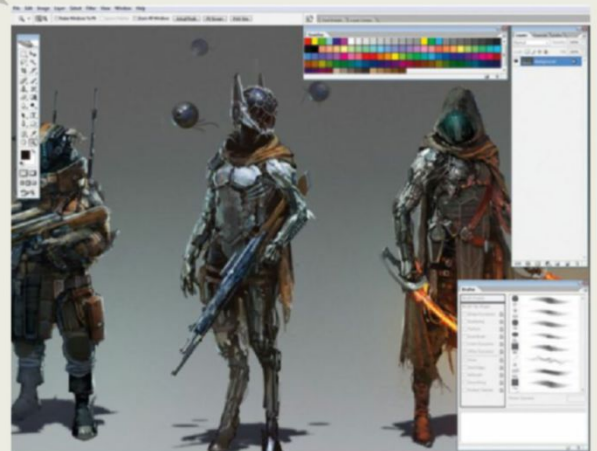
Here, through some tips, notes and tricks, I'll try to show you how to create

easy recognisable, original and readable characters quickly... all by solving several industry design problems!

In the end you'll need to create a workflow that will enable you to quickly solve your client's visual needs and/or problems, all by – most importantly – keeping your inner-child and passion for creativity alive!

1 WORK ON YOUR WORKSPACE

The more familiar you are with your digital workspace, the faster you'll work and over the years using it will become second nature. I like to keep it as simple as possible. I mainly open my colour palette and layer windows, and eventually my brushes when experimenting with texture or painterly brushes. I use the Tab key to make them disappear while I paint. And remember to save your workspace. I create a folder called ART-TOOLS, where I name and save my colour palettes, brushes, textures and so on, in order to use them when needed and avoid having unwieldy, overloaded palettes.



All images © Ubisoft Entertainment unless otherwise stated.

2 THUMBNAILING AND SKETCHING

You need to be able to quickly communicate your intentions with the team or your client. Some artists will do thumbnails, others quick sketches or speed paints. This is not the moment to show off your skills or get picky about details. Keep it simple and go for readability, and clear and recognisable shapes and forms, which you can use to explain your first ideas. Share and show them before you go further, to avoid wasting time on rendering.





3 LIMITED SAMPLE

Avoid doing too many thumbnail sketches. Your client is busy and giving them too many options isn't going to help. I ask some questions and invite them to put keywords on their ideas. I usually do two or three iterations of a character, like in this speed painting for Viking research in *For Honor*. Then get back to them to see if we're heading in the right direction. The more you know about your client's vision, the more precise your designs will be and the less time you'll waste.



4 VARIETY KEEPS THINGS FRESH

To maintain coherence, my final works are often rendered the same way. But when I start on a new character I like to switch styles and experiment. Sometimes I'll do colour speed paintings, like the Viking research. Sometimes I'll start in black and white or on paper. Other times, like this one, I'll work with strong outlines.

Each approach forces you to think differently and helps keep the passion for creativity and discovery alive. It's also a way of challenging myself. This is early Viking research for *For Honor*. I started with paper and pen, then scanned it into Photoshop.



“The more you know about your client's vision, the more precise your designs will be”

5 FROM CARTOON TO RENDERING

This is a design for Sophie Trenet, a former assassin from the game *Assassin's Creed Unity*, and it's a good example of my previous point about limiting the number of my initial concepts. I found out as much as possible about her character and then put down a few simple thumbnails, to communicate my ideas to the team.

I often sketch these thumbnails on a low-resolution canvas. For my outlines I often use a hard-edged Round brush, leaving Pen Pressure unchecked and Opacity set to 80 per cent. Then I apply flat opaque colours with either no or minimal amount of shading or gradients.

Once we agreed on her design (on the left), I increased the canvas resolution to between 5,000 and 9,000 pixels and then started painting in light, shadows, details and so forth, until I was happy with the final image (right).



6 LOOK INTO MY EYES...

You don't need to design a whole character to capture the essentials. Much of a character's allure and personality comes from the head, its position, the face, and especially their expression and their eyes. Often it's about what he or she reflects when you look them in the eyes for the first time. Shoes come later, once you all agree on what really defines the character's personality. This was early research for *For Honor*, where I tried to catch the spirit of an old, proud and powerful warrior.

“I'm sitting there in my blacksmith's forge and these assassin dudes walk in and ask me to design weapons”



7 BODY LANGUAGE

You'll often use static poses when concentrating on character design. But static doesn't have to mean boring and sometimes it's their body language or pose that shows what they are all about. This revolutionary for *Assassin's Creed Unity* needed to show fighting spirit, so I tried to visualise this in his pose, expression and body language. Trying different poses also averts the danger of routine getting into my workflow too often.



8 BE WHAT YOU DRAW

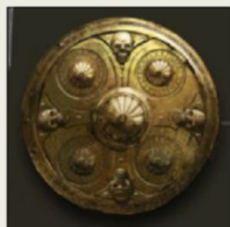
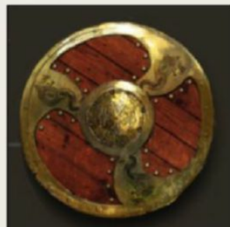
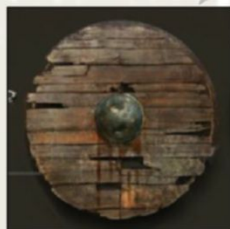
I got asked to redesign the legendary assassin's blade on *Assassin's Creed Unity*, as well as their other weapons. I felt honoured and excited.

I imagine sitting there in my blacksmith's forge and these assassin dudes walk in and ask me to design weapons for them. I like to imagine how I would have done it if I had to design these weapons for real. By doing this I already know what it should look like before I start to draw.

For Arno's Phantom Blade I made fake technical designs, inspired by clocks, trying to make them look like they could really work. How could an assassin kill somebody with a hidden blade from afar without a noise... A mini crossbow blade! The Phantom Blade was made for real in the *Man at Arms* YouTube series. It was a blast to see it work!

9 MAKE IT LOOK REAL

These weapon concepts were done as early research for For Honor. When designing weapons, characters, props and so forth it's important to make them look real. Think about them as actual objects. What have these people or weapons been through? In this case, I ask how long have the characters been fighting with these weapons? The shields, for example, would have been hit a few times already and so they should show cuts, dents and scratches. For the swords, their metal becomes less shiny through time perhaps, and if a character has been in a battle recently he probably won't look at all clean and shiny either. Scars, dirt, ripped clothes, scratches and so on make your designs look authentic.



10 LASSO AND PEN TOOLS

As a concept artist, sometimes you have to tackle other tasks during the design stage. These can range from mock-ups or storyboards for trailers, to presentations and logos, or even ideas for the player's interface and menus.

Here I've mainly used the Lasso and Pen Tools for creating the faction logos in For Honor. I directly draw the shapes using the free-hand Lasso Tool, with Feather set to 0 per cent and then fill the mask with either the foreground or background colour using a shortcut on my Cintiq or Intuos.

Directly drawing shapes using the Lasso Tool and filling them up with foreground or background colours is a technique that's often used when speed painting.



11 TRIGGERING EMOTIONS

These designs were done for the For Honor faction web pages. Mood and colour play a big role in how a viewer takes in a character or landscape, and you can use these elements to trigger or boost a viewer's emotional response. For example, emotions such as fear, anxiety or evil can be triggered with dark or washed-out greens and blues. They're often used in horror films. Using warmer or pastel colours could generate more positive emotions. Try to observe which colours are used in films to bring about certain emotions, and apply them to your art. ➡



12 MORE POSSIBILITIES, MORE CHARACTERS

The next-gen consoles come with more power and more possibilities. One trend that's accompanying this boost in hardware technology is the endless choices players have when customising their characters. This means artists have to create plenty of costumes, weapons and accessories for the same character, to enable people to create their own heroes. These costume designs were done for Arno in Assassin's Creed Unity. Often I start out with a basic costume and then slowly build it up by adding layers, to create several variations of the same outfit.



EVOLUTION OF A CHARACTER

A game character may have lived a long life before they even make it on to the player's screen...



A lot of sketches, iterations and research are done on characters before the public sees them. This unfortunately results in plenty of rejected designs. A lot of people and their visions are involved in this process. Here are some early Elises from Assassin's Creed Unity.



The thumbnails were created quickly to communicate my intentions. I kept them simple and went for readability and clear and recognisable shapes and forms. I shared this with the rest of the team before going further, to avoid wasting time on unnecessary rendering.



Main characters often change during the making of a game. Scenario, animation, budgets and gameplay all have an effect, and if one changes during production, the character often changes with it. Elise needed to be softened up a little bit to better fit her love story with Arno.



13 BACKGROUNDS AND... ACTION!

Sometimes, just like I did here for early research done on non-playing characters for Assassin's Creed Unity, adding a background can strengthen the storytelling of your characters: where they're from, who they are, and what faction they belong to. Furthermore, adding some action or storytelling to the scene could show what they're up to or the role they have in the game. I like to add backgrounds, when time permits, because it's fun and better emphasises the character's part in a story. It's also a way to energise your character's presentation.

“By hearing those words, I saw her standing in front of me, without picking up my pen. Concept art is a language to express your ideas”

14 THE MAGIC OF KEYWORDS

When creating a character from scratch I find it helpful to sum up their nature in just three or four keywords. If chosen with enough thought and care, such words will often create strong mental images. For example, what springs to mind when you try to visualise 'desperate', 'ruthless' or 'scheming'?

During the character design process I like to ask the client or team for a couple of keywords that best describe the character for them. I'll always remember the words Dan Hay, producer of the Far Cry series, told me when working on Citra from Far Cry 3. "Remko, think about: bitch, voodoo and sexy mama!" Just by hearing those words, I directly saw her there standing in front of me, without picking up my pen. In the end, concept art is just a language through which you express your ideas.





Photoshop DEPICT A DERELICT ENVIRONMENT

Elliott Lilly shows how to turn your pre-existing art work into a new, coherent video game concept, during a mock art test





We review
Elliott's book
on succeeding
as a games
concept artist
Turn to page 96

Artist PROFILE

Elliott Lilly
COUNTRY: US



Elliott is a freelance concept artist, adjunct professor and author, who has been working in the video game industry for nearly a decade.
www.elliottlillyart.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Trying to become a professional concept artist and work in the video game industry? Then at some point in your job application process you'll likely be given an art test.

Like a typical assignment given by the art director, an art test usually consists of a brief backstory, image requirements and a goal. It's designed to gauge your ability to follow instructions, challenge your creativity in a controlled context and test

your level of commitment. Even though it can be completed over the course of a few weeks, and in the comfort of your own home, it can still be stressful.

To alleviate the stress, I've developed a system of checks and balances that ensures I never overlook the details. It's a surefire way to understand the assignment, a systematic check that you have executed on each expectation.

For the purpose of this workshop, I'll also be cherry-picking elements from my

own, pre-existing artwork, to help speed up the creative process and stimulate new ideas. These images were incomplete images, or 'idea starters' that I never completed. Art tests are a great way to bring new purpose to old work – assuming it's of a good-enough quality and appropriate for the challenge, of course.

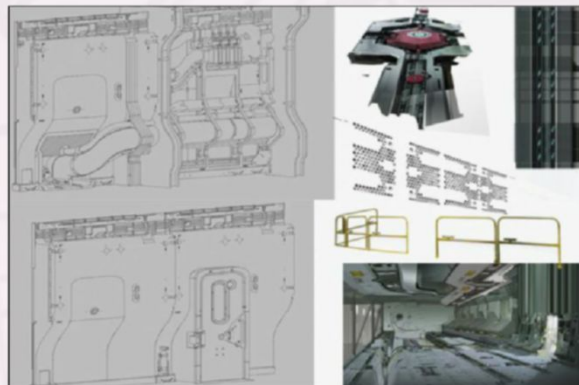
This system of handling art tests has worked well for me and in this workshop I'll show you my methods for tackling an art test step by step.

Art Test – Environments

Create a mood painting of a derelict interior hallway, set in a futuristic underground facility. There should be an instance of a struggle, fire, or environmental destruction. Space should feel sci-fi and techy.

Goal is to show us the structure of the space and give us an idea of how you might approach an initial establishing shot for a game level.

WHO	SCIENTIST AND MILITARY PERSONNEL WORKED ON SECRETIVE GOVERNMENT PROJECTS IN THIS BUNKER. PLAYER IS INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER UNCOVERING ITS SECRETS. FIRST PERSON TO BE IN THIS SPACE IN 15 YEARS.
WHAT	A LOCAL GAS EXPLOSION CAUSED THIS ENTIRE WING TO BE SEALED OFF. SINCE THEN, SPACE HAS BECOME NEGLECTED AND ABANDONED.
WHERE	SERVICE DUCTS/ MAINTENANCE TUNNELS USED TO MOVE HEAVY MACHINERY FROM PLACE TO PLACE. INDUSTRIAL FEEL.
WHEN	LAB WAS ABANDONED IN 2036. CURRENTLY 2051.
WHY	PLAYER IS SENT HERE TO DISCOVER WHAT REALLY HAPPENED
HOW	PLAYER FINDS ENTRANCE TO FORGOTTEN FACILITY. GAMEPLAY IS TO FIND POWER, GAIN ACCESS TO AREAS, TAKE PICTURES AND GET OUT BEFORE ARMED GUARDS ARRIVE.

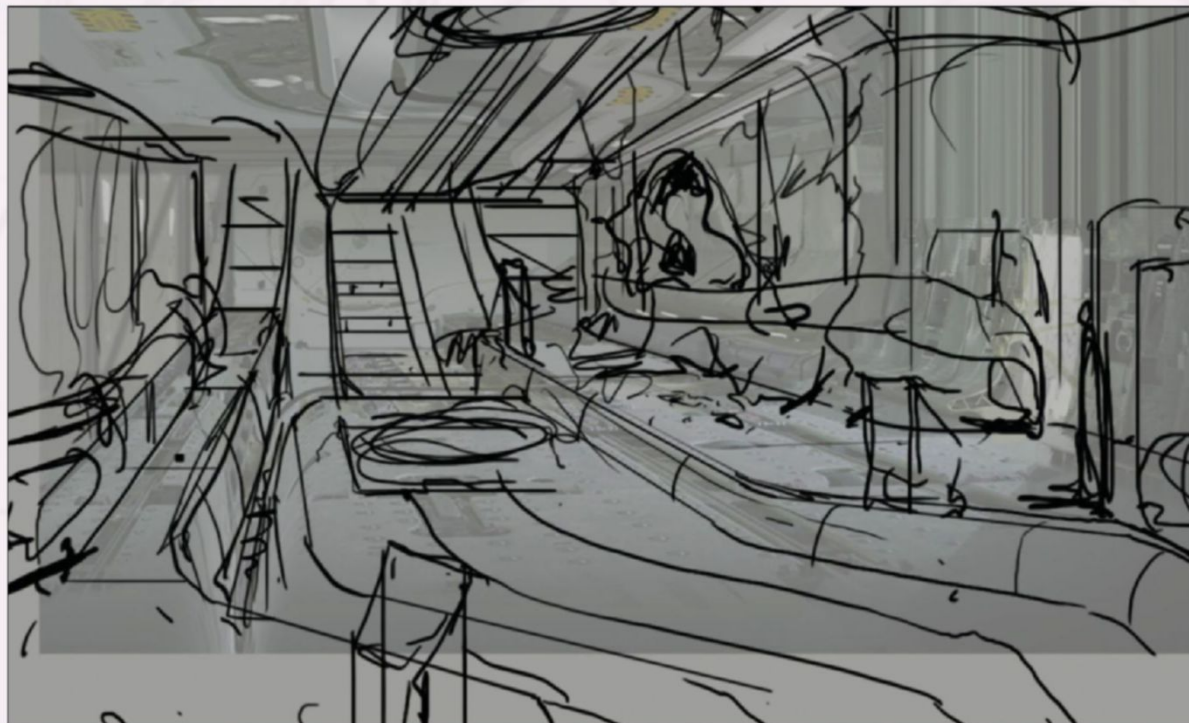


1 Understand the assignment

I read the assignment and pick out the key words that identify the expectations of the image. These words act like a checklist of must-haves for the image to be successful. I also take some initiative and create a backstory by answering the Five Ws (who, what, where, when and why?). This process helps me flesh out the unknown details and forms my narrative of the scene.

2 Gather the troops

Rummaging through my art files, I chose several images that I'm proud of, which have strong elements I can cherry-pick from. These images will be a spring board for my future ideas and will help speed up the process. I arrange the wall panels, floor pieces and other elements that I like in a folder and set them aside for reference later.



3 Thumbnail studies

Because my source material is fixed, and I already have a good idea of what I want to achieve, I doodle just enough of a thumbnail to reaffirm my intentions and what I want to achieve. If you were doing this for real, you'd want to spend a good amount of time on this stage, working through your composition, areas of interest and so forth.

RESOURCES WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
HARD ROUND 176 1

This hard Round brush is my go-to tool for line work. I find that it works best for me at 3-5 pixels in diameter.

SMOKE

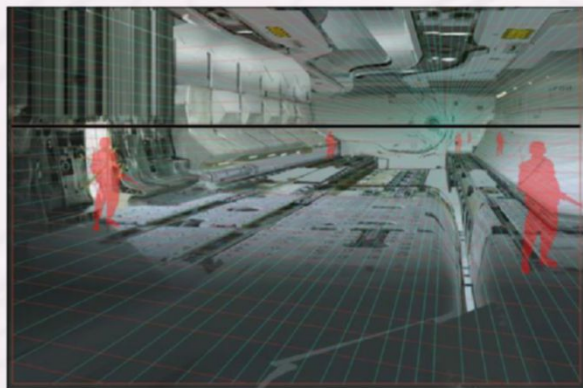
A great brush for clouds or smoke. Excellent for adding atmosphere to your image.

SAMPLE BRUSH 10 3

Another one I picked up online. Its pressure sensitivity is great for textured work.

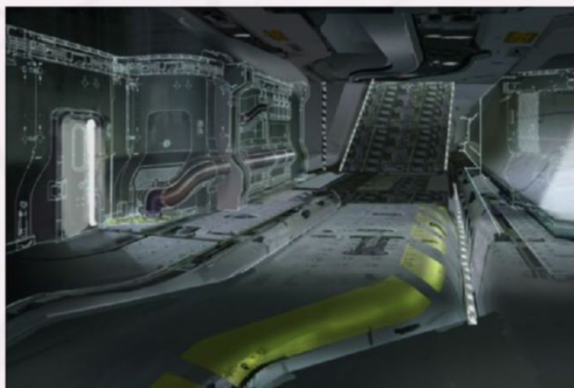
USMC RADIO OPERATOR

I got this brush from deviantART and use it as a placeholder, for a character or for scale.



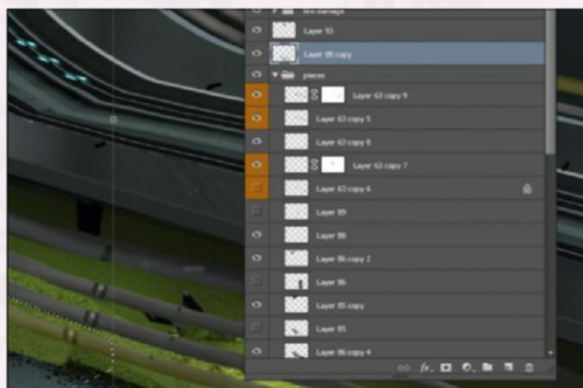
4 Establishing scale and perspective

The first thing I do is expand my background image to fill the canvas, and align my perspective grid to match. I also have a character brush that I use for scale. I stamp it once, then scale him to size around the canvas for reference. Establishing your perspective and scale at an early stage will save you from a massive headache down the road.



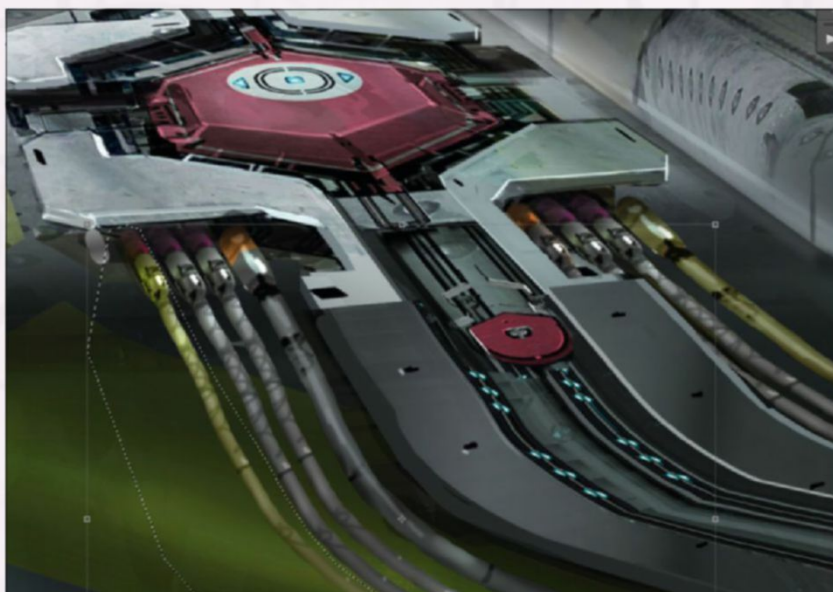
5 Line work and value pass

Now that the scale is already established, I know what size I should skew the doors and ceilings to. I add my line work and do a quick value pass to see where I want the light to come from. Value sketches can sometimes be quick and easy studies (normally done as part of my thumbnail process) to establish the mood of an image.



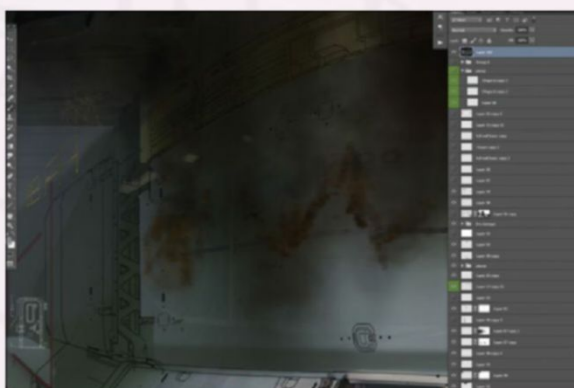
6 It's skew time!

I like to work smart when placing elements of interest into my scene. I skew this techie element into place to give the illusion that it's lying flat on the floor. This can get tricky, but having a perspective grid helps. I draw one pipe, then duplicate it twice, altering their colours so they look different. I then flip this batch to match the other side.



7 Another scale check

I'm constantly checking to ensure scale is clearly defined. One of the things I really enjoy about painting digitally is those happy accidents that occur when you least expect them. While doing a scale check, I get an idea to paint a stairwell in the background. I love this idea because it adds an extra area of interest and makes the hallway feel grand. Win!



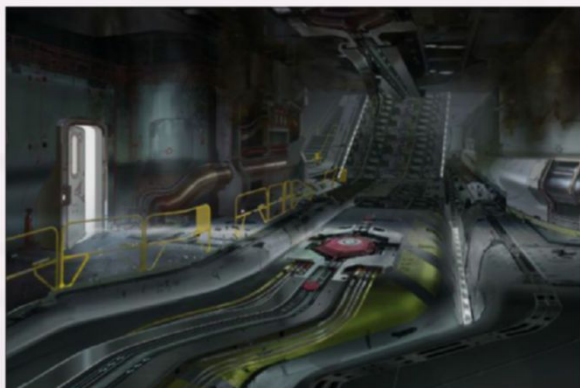
8 Fire with mixed brushes

Part of the backstory I created while using my Five Ws was that this area has suffered extensive fire damage. Ensuring that I add this element in my scene, I begin to paint in the scorch marks. I gather some photo reference of what a fire burn looks like, then use several custom brushes to mimic this effect.

PRO SECRETS

Work smart, not hard

A good trick I learned early on is the process of duplicating a flat shape into a pattern, then skewing that pattern into perspective and using it on the floor, walls or wherever. Since you can get some crazy patterns, I also use this technique when I'm having little luck creating a unique shape. This technique is helpful when you're at a creative impasse.



Shortcuts
Skew your selection
Shift+Cmd+I (Mac)
Shift+Ctrl+Alt (PC)
Quickly skew selection
- handy for a flat wall perspective.

9 Further refinement

At this point, my brain is on autopilot. I work around the image, adding damage to various elements here and there, such as the track system and railings. I make sure there's clear separation between the fore-, mid- and background. The most important thing for me here is that the image reads well.

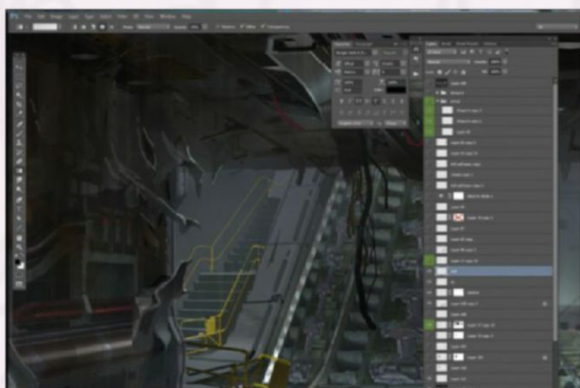
10 Flip and check

In a further effort to ensure readability, I always like to flip and greyscale the image. This is a great way to get a fresh perspective of your work in progress. After doing this, I instantly notice that my values are getting crushed. They are too dark in the background and several shapes have gotten a bit lost, so I spend a bit of time cleaning them up.

PRO SECRETS

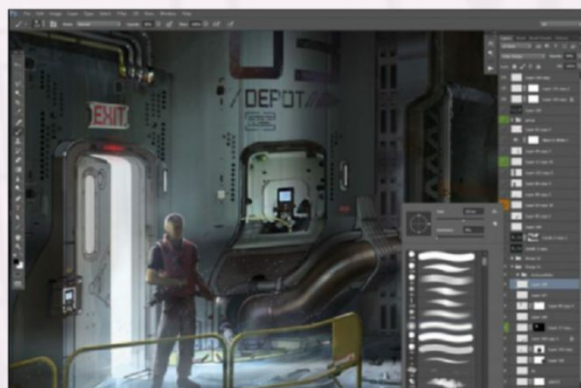
Hide the marching ants

My first order of business after making a selection, is to hide those pesky black and white lines. Adobe calls them 'marching ants' I believe and I find them distracting when working against a dark background. This can be done by pressing Ctrl+H after a selection has been made. Once you are done painting within that selection, you can press Ctrl+H to show it again, or Ctrl+D to deselect everything. Try it!



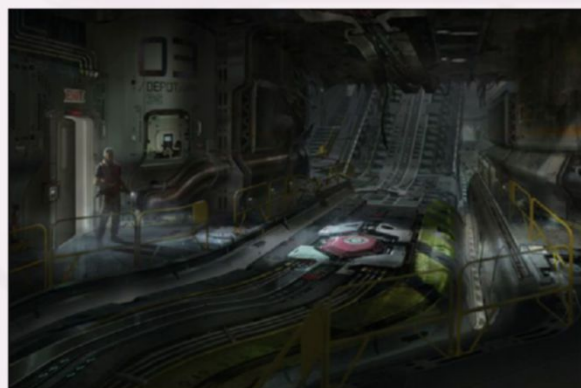
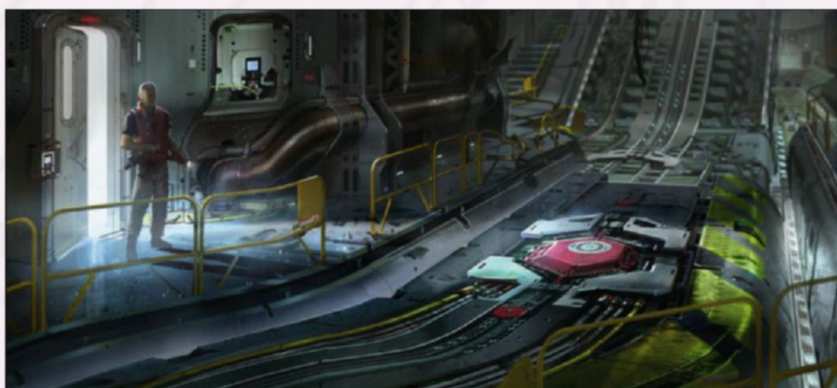
11 Damage with the Lasso tool

Attempting to make it look like there was an explosion in the area, I begin to draw busted-out wall panels and such-like. Using the Lasso tool I select an area I want to paint, then hide the selection so I can see what I'm doing, and proceed to use a gradient to fill in that selection.



12 Painting the figure

I decide to place a figure in my image. From my Five Ws I know he's a member of the press, so I give him regular clothing, a camera and a flashlight. He's not the main focus and so I keep him loose and gestural. I don't paint his face because his attributes are unimportant (he's mainly there to reaffirm scale).



13 Review and compare

Feeling good about my image, I check it against my initial intent. I revisit my Five Ws to ensure they're clear in my picture. I ask my wife Kim, who is unaware of my assignment, to describe the image to me. She gets about 90 per cent of it right, which tells me I've reached most of my goal - and highlights a few areas that need improvement.

14 Final details and polish

I address a few issues and make final adjustments. I flatten my image and begin to address it as a whole (correcting values, tightening details, adding filters and so on). I know I've already achieved my goal, so everything beyond this point is just polish. It's becoming more of an illustration than a concept, but for an art test, it's always best to knock it out of the park! 🌸

Krita Desktop CONTROLLING COLOURS IN KRITA



Learn how to use different Krita Desktop Color Selectors and their settings to your advantage, as **Katarzyna Oleska** explains the basics

To start painting in Krita you will first need a Color Selector with which to choose your colours. Krita offers a variety of them. You can turn them on and off from the top menu by clicking Settings>Dockers and choosing from the list. Here are the ones you can work with: Advanced, Specific, Artistic and Small

Color Selectors, as well as Color Sliders and Digital Color Mixers. Some of them, such as Advanced Color Selector, can be modified.

The more advanced settings may seem like they're unnecessary at first. But they may change the painting experience once you understand them and very soon you'll learn which of the settings suit your artistic needs best.

Artist PROFILE

Katarzyna Oleska
COUNTRY: England

Katarzyna is a self-taught illustrator who works for various publishers and private customers, specialising in portraits, caricatures, fantasy and sci-fi illustration. She's known as an illustrator of some major book titles such as Terry Pratchett Discworld series.
<http://ifxm.ag/kataro>

ADJUSTING YOUR COLOUR SETTINGS

If you click the Settings icon at the top left on the Advanced Color Selector (ACS), you'll be able to adjust that Selector and another, called Color Sliders. Even though it may seem unnecessary to adjust these settings at first, some changes applied to them can make your colour selecting easier.



A. General tab

Here you can choose a Color Space for your Advanced Color Selector (ACS) without changing the whole colour profile of your image. For example, while working on your painting in RGB mode you can choose to switch your ACS to Grayscale or CMYK Color Space. You can also choose what will happen to the Shade Selector when you shrink the ACS and determine the nature of the zoom for your Selector.

B. Color Selector tab

You can choose what type of selector you want to work with: HSV, HSL, HSI or HSY. As you click them a description will open to the right explaining each type separately. You can also choose the shape of the selector. Not everybody likes the default triangle shape of the Advanced Color Selector. I personally prefer the one on the top right.

C. Shade Selector tab

You're able to adjust the look of your Shade Selector, too.

D. Color Patches tab

Here you can adjust how the Color History is going to be displayed: how many patches, their size, count and location.

E. Color Sliders tab

This setting actually affects a different Docker. Here you can choose what kind of sliders are going to be visible in the Color Sliders Docker.

1 Advanced Color Selector

The outside circle enables you to choose the Hue (colour). Meanwhile, the triangle in the middle shows the mixture of three colours situated at its vertices: white, black and the chosen hue (50 per cent lightness and 100 per cent saturation). At the bottom a Shade Selector suggests different colour options for the recently chosen colour, while on the right you can see your Color History.



2 Pop-up Selector

When you click the right mouse button or one of your pen buttons (by the way, you'll need to assign this action to your pen button if it's not yet assigned to it), a pop-up Selector will automatically appear in front of you. This pop-up Selector contains a Color Selector surrounded by Color History, as well as a Brushes Collection from a selected Brush Presets Tag, which appears in the drop-down menu.



3 Small Color Selectors

You can also use smaller Color Selectors. Specifically these are: Small Color Selector, Specific Color Selector and Color Sliders, operating on Hue, Saturation and Lightness variables among others (you can choose your variables in the Advanced Color Selection Settings – see information in point E on the right). All of these take up less space, but at the same time can make choosing colours harder.





Photoshop USE A LIMITED COLOUR PALETTE

Artist PROFILE

Matt Gaser
COUNTRY: US



Matt is an art director and concept artist who's worked on some of the top films and video games around today.
www.mattgaser.com

**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**

See page 6 now!

Matt Gaser shows how keeping a tight rein on colour can result in a more satisfying painting experience

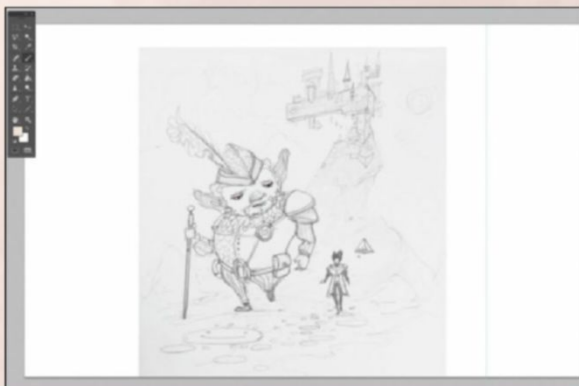
For this workshop I'll be guiding you through methods I've used on how to control colour and light while applying a limited colour palette.

Finding the perfect inspiration that leads to a great idea, that later becomes a layout is a natural process in creating a painting. Yet finding the right colours or mood to anchor the world you've drawn can sometimes be hard to pin down, and at times very frustrating.

If all else fails, keep your colours, values and tones close together. Squint your eyes and picture an image where everything is coloured from a similar place in the rainbow. Painting this way can be useful in setting the tone for your main subject matter to pop. Finding the right mood early on will help identify a family of hues to work from, setting up boundaries within a range of intermediate colours for you to use throughout the painting process.

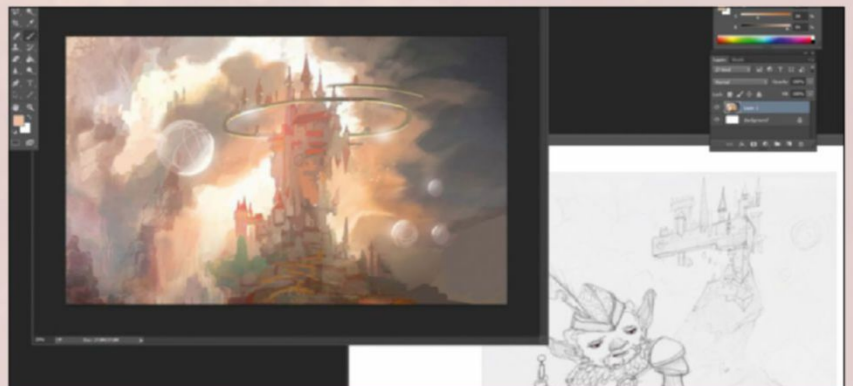
A technique I sometimes use begins with abandoned or unfinished paintings of my own, integrating this material over a nice layout or sketch. This can set the painting on the right course in unexpected ways. Reference material is your next best option if you want to experiment in this way.

So, let your brain relax from the rainbow of choices out there and let's get creative with a limited colour palette that puts you firmly in the driving seat.



1 Creating the layout

Before I begin I generally have a simple idea in mind. This can be from a sketch I've done already or an image in my head. In this case I'm working from a drawing I created using pencil. After I've scanned it and imported it to Photoshop, I widen the canvas size to landscape format. This painting is for a book cover and will need to be wider on the right side for the flaps.



2 Starting with good reference

Because my layout already has a castle in the background I decide to use an unfinished colour sketch of mine that had a mountain palace high above in the clouds. When I saw this image from my library I knew I had found the right mood and colour to start my new illustration. The same technique can be applied to stock photography or any other image from your photo reference archive. ➡➡

PRO SECRETS

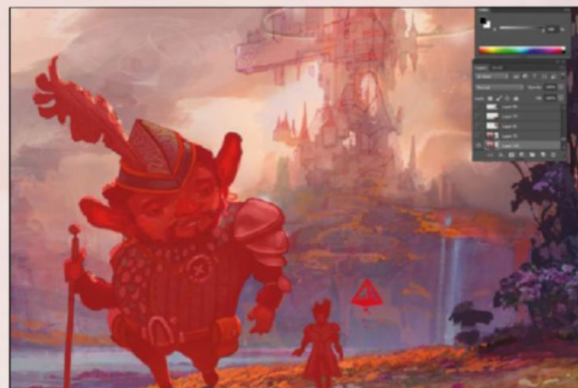
Painting with light

A method I like to use while I'm about mid-way through a painting is to duplicate all the layers to my file. Then I collapse all these layers into a complete image that's flattened, and copy this flatten layer and darken it between 30 and 50 per cent. What this does is enable you to erase with light. Because the bottom layer is lighter than the top layer you can effectively paint with light, by erasing areas you want to be hit by a light source.



3 Laying down colour

I begin by multiplying (Layers>Multiply) my reference image into my layout, then use other textures and Photoshop brushes to fill in blank areas. Because my reference image is mostly warm tones, I transition other areas into soft purples and greens. I need to make the main character stand out, so I shift his costume to more cyan, blues and metallic armour.



4 Layering Channel selections

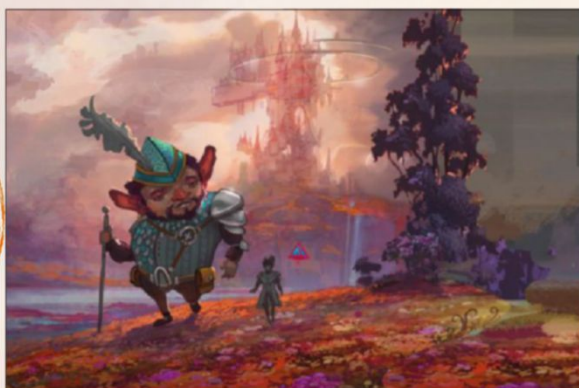
By selecting the Channels mode (bottom left tab on the tool bar) I'm able to paint in my selection in red. Then I press the tab again, which turns it into a selection that I can save (Select>Save Selection). I'll do this process for every major area in the painting, saving my selections as I go. This way I can easily paint behind or in front of areas quickly.

Shortcuts

Brush size

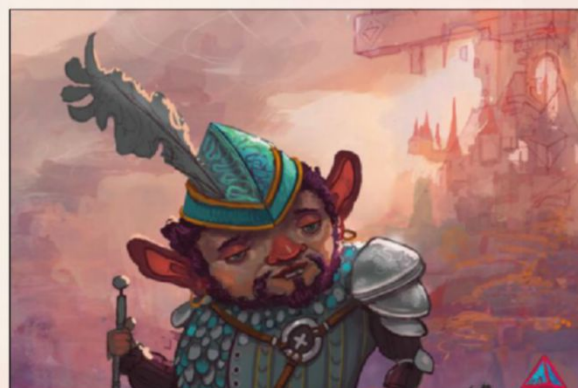
[and] (PC & Mac)

Use the square bracket keys to quickly increase or decrease the brush size.



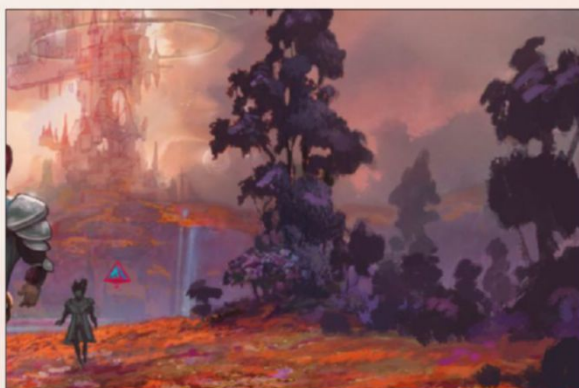
5 Light source

The tones need work and I shift the overall palette to more red/purples. Then I work on the direction of light. By studying the source as it comes from behind the castle I drop in stronger highlights while darkening my mid-tones for more contrast. I add a lake behind the main character, to help separate him from the background and add trees and foliage in the mid-ground.



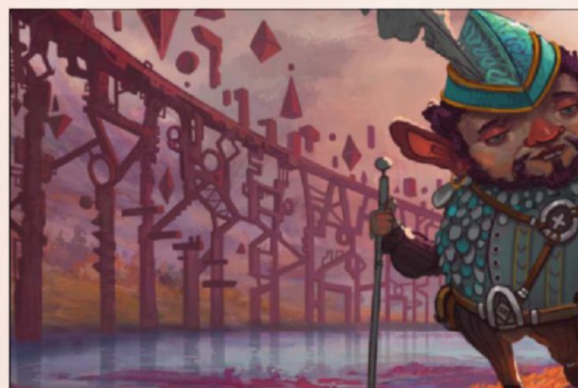
6 Focusing on detail

I like to work all over the place as I paint, building up details, moving on to another part. Here I focus on the main character's face. The sun is behind him and he's got larger ears, so I'm pushing the skin's translucency, and striking highlights in areas where the sun's on his face. This gives me a value to base the mid-tones on his face, which is mostly in shadow.



7 Balancing the composition

The left side of the image needs more focus, so I add more trees and fill in the sky with tones that are from the rest of the scene. However, I don't want too much brightness in these areas because the castle location should be the strongest in terms of contrast to my characters. So I keep things soft and mid-tone in value on the right side. I also keep the colours purplish in tone.



8 Adding the bridge

I notice the left side seems too barren. So I introduce a strange bridge into the background. This will also lead the eye to the main character and castle. I chose colours that are similar to other areas in the scene, such as reds and purples. I don't want make the bridge a totally difference hue because it would pull the eye away from the main subject matter.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

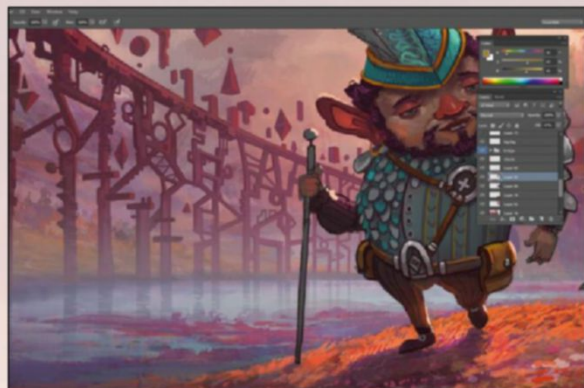
PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: GASER DRY BRUSH

I use this brush a lot for making clouds and giving objects texture. It's like a real dry brush.

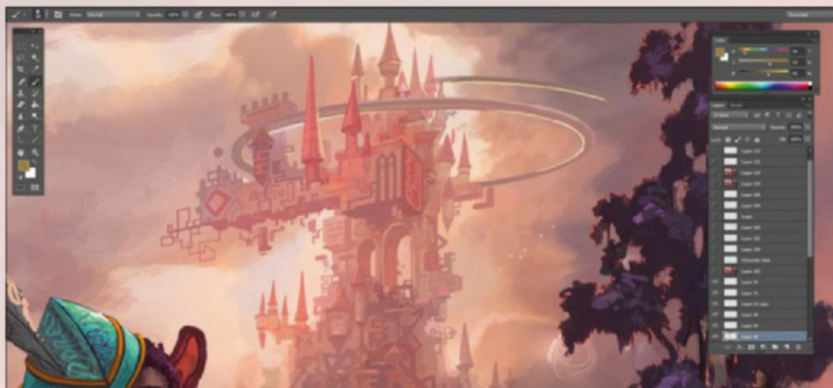
GASER OIL BRUSH

A great brush for blocking in colour and landscapes. Has a buttery feel, like oil paint.



9 Knocking back values

After adding the bridge I see that the values are getting a bit too close to the foreground elements. So I decide to add a fog layer. This will help with atmospheric perspective and push the main character forward in the scene.



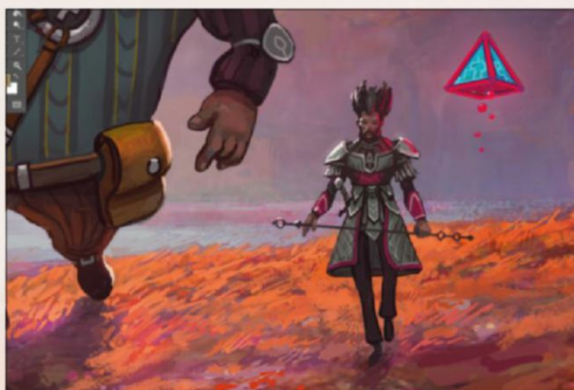
10 Castle details

Now I move on to the castle. I use a round Hard brush and draw as I paint the outline and inner details of the palace. I want these values to be very close together and so I squint my eyes as I work, comparing the hues with each other. Most of this area is in complete shadow. Only subtle areas along the edge are hit by the sunlight that's shining through the clouds.



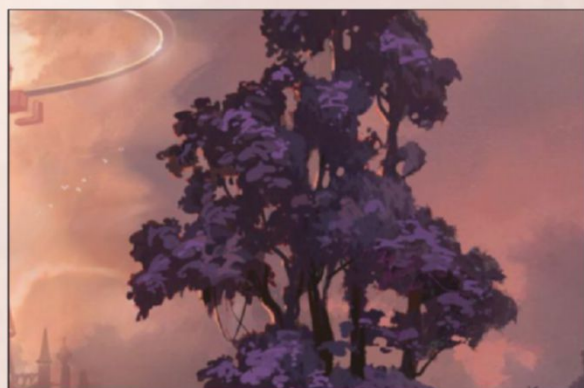
11 Final main character detail

I move back to the foreground character. I work on the feather in his hat, fine-tune the values in his face and around the eyes. I spend time on his costume and brighten the middle areas, while leaving more contrast on the edges of his silhouette. This will help turn the form and reduce any flattening. I also brighten the scene directly behind him, to push his values forward.



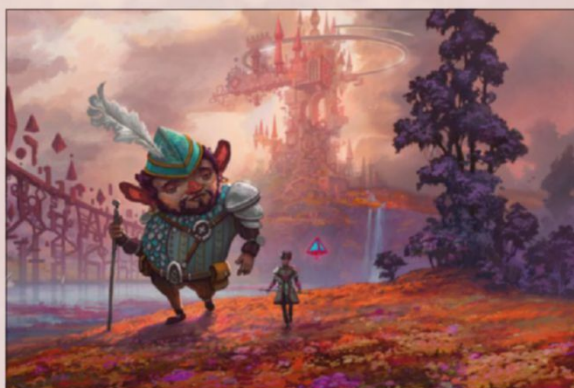
12 Detailing the other character

I'm now ready to finish the details on the side character. Because he's so small I start a new file and paint on him at a much higher resolution. Then I drop this layer into the final painting and scale him back down to fit. Even though his resolution is smaller in the final image, because I painted him separately at a hi res, those details will come through.



13 Fine-tuning the scene

As I scan through the image I return to the trees on the right side, indicating leaves and branches. I also add birds and little details throughout, while making sure my values all group and don't compete with the rest of the image.



14 Final highlights and detail

As the image comes to a finish I drop in little details such as the floating boats in the background or rim light on the characters. I also colour shift areas so that they match more closely. As I look over the image and find it harder to see things that need attention, I realise it's complete and am happy to call this painting done! 🍌

PRO SECRETS

Add details with a filter

Another technique I like to use is the Poster Edges filter (Filter>Filter gallery>Poster Edges). When I'm close to finishing a painting I will duplicate it, flatten all my layers and run the Poster Edges filter. It crunches all the edges and can be harsh at first, so make sure to reduce the Transparency by 60-80 per cent. The result can sharpen areas and give you more detail without a lot of work. You may have to erase areas where the filter isn't working, though.

Photoshop

PAINT A DRAGON WITH PERSONALITY

Manuel Castañón shares his process for painting an original dragon, from sketch to finished illustration

Artist PROFILE

Manuel Castañón
COUNTRY: Mexico



Manuel is a 21-year-old self-taught illustrator who's been

in love with fantasy and medieval art for as long as he can remember.

<http://ifxm.ag/mcastan>



See page 6 now!

This image was made as an entry for the Facebook group Draw or Die's monthly Ascension contest. The idea was to paint ourselves with our own personal dragon, one that would "Symbolise who you are and what you love about everything in life". It was meant to be our inner fire, as artists, something that drives us forward.

I must confess this prospect made me feel like a child. Since dragons were among the first things I started drawing at the age of four, my love for them has only grown stronger over the years. I wanted to show my love for fantasy and art, the joy of my inner child, what I am and what I want to be, all in one image.

Needless to say it wasn't easy. This is the fourth iteration I did for the contest over a one-month period. It was the breakthrough after a lot of failed compositions and colour choices, but once I arrived at this sketch everything went smoothly. This is the process I'm going to show you.

Never let yourself get discouraged when you're struggling. Craig Mullins once said, "Failure is 99 per cent of the artistic process". And he's right!



Defining light sources

Defining your light sources is a very important step. The main light is the sun, which comes down from the right upon the scene. This enabled me to use the shadow of the mountains to create rhythm with the lights and darks in the background.

How I create...

A DRAGON RIDER AND HIS MOUNT



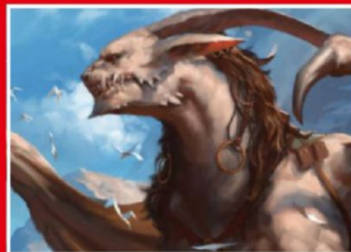
1 Line work sketch

Some people work better from shapes, others work better from line work. Starting with lines feels more natural to me. I like the composition and the idea of this sketch. It looks like the character is protected under the dragon's wing.



2 Adding 'stripes'

I create a new layer under the lines and start painting. I want to make this image bright and cheerful. I use the lighting to 'stripe' the image and create depth, while at the same time keeping a sense of warm light and cool shadows.



3 Refine, refine, refine!

From this point the process is pretty straightforward - just paint over the lines! I use reference for the face and take inspiration from other artists for the environment - and from horses, to help depict the dragon's muscles.

Storytelling elements

The transformations of the sheets of paper into dragons as they leave the notebook are there to bring interest and some story to the image. I spent a good amount of time messing around with them, trying to make the shapes read well without attracting too much attention.



Reference usage

When you're just sketching stuff or practising, it's fine to do everything from imagination. However, reference becomes essential for a professional-looking illustration, especially for faces or other anatomical details. Having said this, capturing the character's look is easy because he's supposed to be me!

Values test

A picture must be understandable. If it doesn't work in black and white it most likely won't work in colour either. Even when the value range is drastically compressed, this image can still be understood and the most basic composition emerges.



RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: TYRION

I got this from Shaddy Safadi's brush pack and it soon became my favourite. I use it for pretty much everything.



Photoshop

HOW TO DESIGN A UNIQUE SPECIES

Ilya Golitsyn encourages you to ask “why”, as he shares his process for designing and illustrating amphibian humanoids for a video game

Artist PROFILE

Ilya Golitsyn
COUNTRY: Netherlands



Ilya is a senior concept artist at Guerrilla Games, specialising in

character design and illustration. He kayaks and paints miniatures in his spare time.

<http://ifxm.ag/ilyago>

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!

Close your eyes and imagine a post-apocalypse world where only humans survived, and because of the natural selection humanoids evolved to fill all the biosphere's habitat. The closest thing to this happened when dinosaurs died, leaving a whole new world for the surviving mammals to conquer.

Now what if the same extinction event happens again, and only sapiens survive, but degrade just enough to start the adaptation process without all the fancy tools they have nowadays? In the course

of, let's say, a million years we'll have new fauna, derived from the homo sapiens. The world of flying, ground digging, hunting and swimming humanoids.

The reason why I've spent so much time describing this world is because the setting is crucial when you have to create any design in an imaginative environment, especially if it's a creature or character concept. It makes the design so much richer when the finished visual doesn't only answers “what” and “how”, but also “why”. In case of creature design, “why” will help to apply anatomy

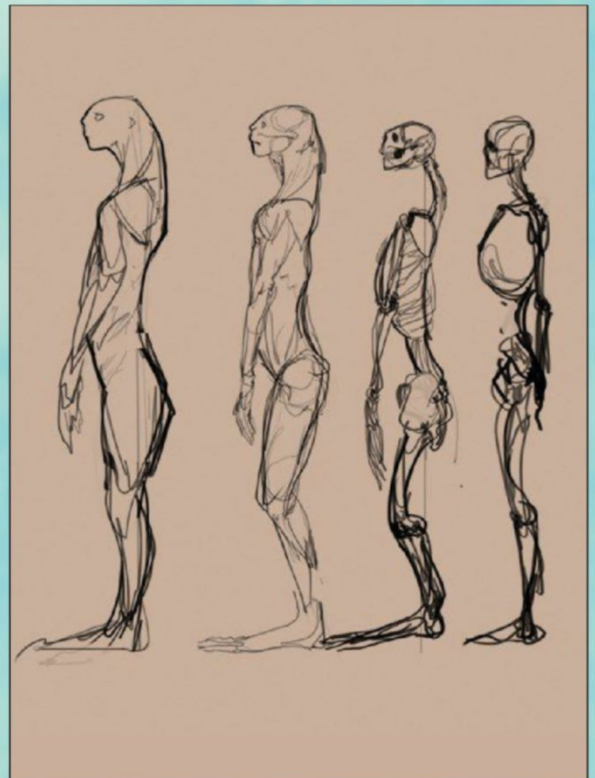
knowledge when designing species that fit certain conditions.

This workshop's task is to create a design of one of the species that could inhabit this world, focusing on aquatic humanoids as a theme. These shouldn't be fish-men or mermaids, but rather humans that evolved into the new homo amphibian. Throughout the workshop I'll show you a bit of my thought process and decision making, as well as the digital painting techniques I use. The result will be an illustration presenting homo amphibians in their natural habitat.



1 Research and idea

I start with rough sketches of the creature's head. I decide I'd like these guys to be partially a land species, like otters or fur seals. These animals breathe once in a while with their nose just above the surface water. That helps me come up with the idea of raising the nose to eye level. Out of several designs I pick the ones that are a bit more human-like.



2 Anatomy design

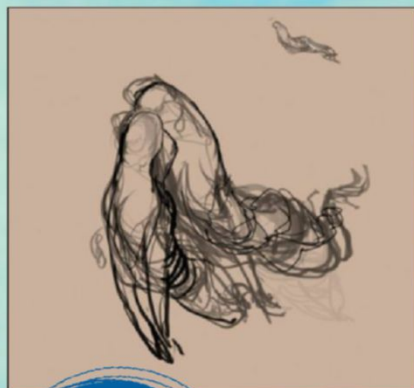
I draw a quick human skeleton profile and make it semi-transparent. On top of it, I line out a new creature's skeleton, keeping in mind the otter's and seal's anatomies: over time these animals have developed more streamlined features and elongated body parts. On the new skeleton I sketch out muscle volumes and adjust it until I'm happy with the result.

PRO SECRETS

Establish your power keys

I use a small gaming keyboard for work in Photoshop. To have access to all the commands I need, I had to change default keyboard shortcuts quite a lot. It took a while to get used to the new setup, but now I have instant access to dozens of functions. Using shortcuts, knowing them by heart and having them all in one hand's reach hugely increases workflow speed. It feels like driving a mecha!





Shortcuts

Redo adjustment

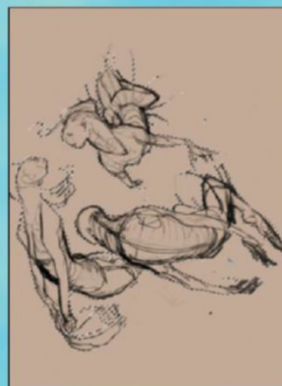
Cmd+alt+shortcut (Mac)
Ctrl+Alt+shortcut (PC)
For example, to reapply latest Hue/Saturation settings, press Ctrl+Alt+U.

3 Composition and pose

Now it's time to start with the main illustration. I do a couple of rough poses sketches, trying to capture the grace that you can see in the underwater footage of sea mammals. I decide to make multiple figures interacting with each other. It'll help me to sell the idea of them being still quite social.

4 Construction line art

As soon as the decision is made about which sketch to work on, I go on to define the body shapes of our creatures with a new line-art pass. Sometimes it's really hard to get certain body parts looking correct from certain angles. In these cases I often do small anatomy sketches at different angles, to help me understand what's going on.

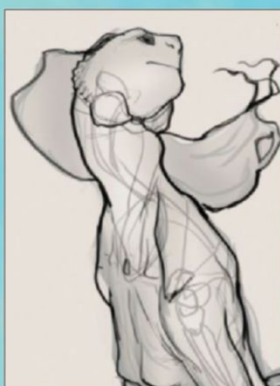


5 Face designs

Before continuing further with the main illustration, I switch to the faces sketches I made earlier and make a cleaner line art version. Switching between images helps to keep things fresh and increases your productivity. It also helps me get into the line art mood and get a better feel for these creatures' facial details before I continue with the main image.

6 Silhouette and volume

Using the Magic Wand tool and a Quick mask I select the silhouette of the line art. I fill with colour and start blocking in basic light, mainly to indicate volumes. This is easy to do with the layer set to Lock Transparent Pixels, which enables you to be bold with brush strokes while staying within a layer's borders.



7 Cleaning up the line art

I use a 'tracing paper' layer when drawing multiple passes of line art: a layer of semi-transparent white colour that helps separate previous line art. I come up with the idea of under-jaw shells that these guys could wear. What if they would use some throat sounds to communicate under water. And in order to amplify these sounds, they would use these shells.

8 First colour and lighting

Usually I begin with a black and white or monochrome image. To start colourising the image, I apply a blue colour layer, set to Multiply. On a separate layer I paint rays of volumetric light. It not only helps create the impression of underwater light, but also helps me define which surfaces should be lit. Directional light from above will help me outline the characters.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
IFX_SPOTS

I've painted air bubbles with this one.

IFX_FLAT_SEMIHARD

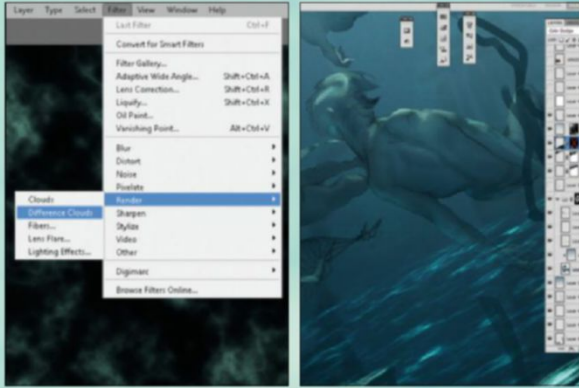
This brush I've used for blocking in light on soft surfaces and sketching the cloth.

IFX_TEXTURE

The random nature of this brush creates happy accidents when applying light and texture.

IFX_SMUDGE_GRAIN

Grain brushes are good for a Smudge tool, creating a nice textured transition along edges.



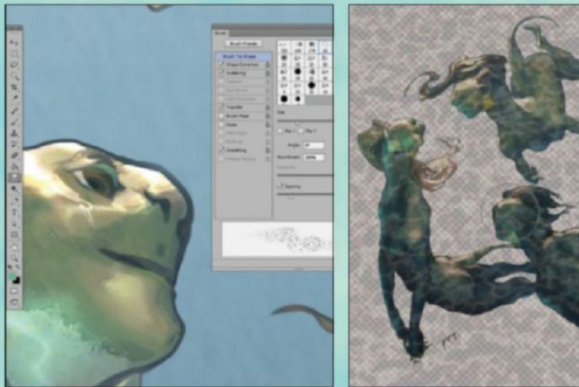
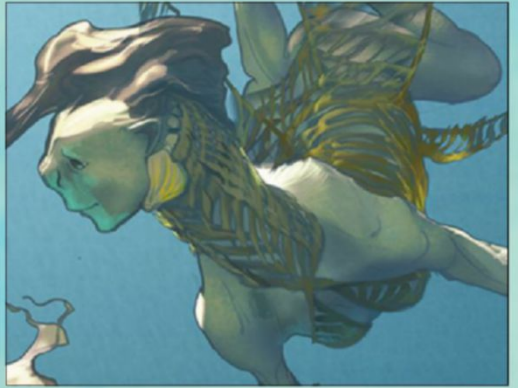
9 Rendering caustics

If you repeatedly apply Difference Clouds on the same layer, it'll create a 'lightning' texture. I give this texture more contrast and set it to Color Dodge. After skewing this layer in perspective I achieve my caustics on the seabed and lights on the water surface. The same layer, with inverted colours and Multiply mode, becomes the water surface's shadows.



10 Designing a culture

I give the amphibians clothing to suggest that they're intelligent and have a tribe-like culture. Because they spend a lot of time in the water, they would probably use seaweeds as a material for garments. Their garments would be soft when underwater, but on the land become stiffer, helping to support their elongated bodies vertically, almost like corsets.



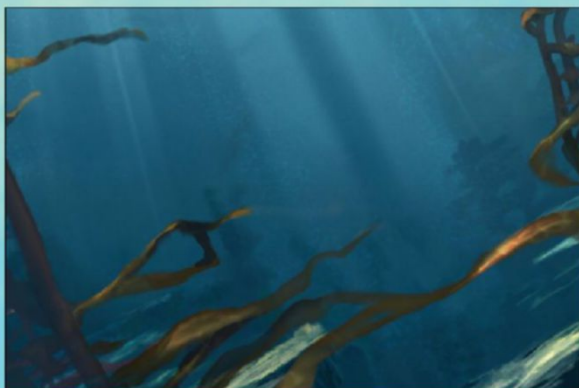
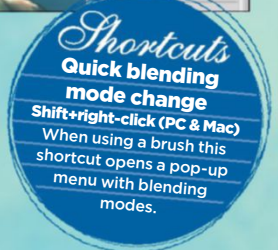
11 Clean up and render

Now it's time to do some rendering. I use the Lasso to clean up the silhouettes and the Smudge tool with a grain brush to soften the brushstroke's edges. I apply same caustic effect on the characters, but this time I warp the texture using a Liquify filter, which ensures it follows their bodies' surfaces. I add light to the clothing as well.



12 Skin colour variation

I add more colour variation to my amphibians' skin. Using a mask painted with a texture brush, I select spots on their bodies and create a new layer (Ctrl+J). With Hue/Saturation, I make it brighter and apply Layer Style with Outer Glow to make the layer's textured edges more readable. Now our amphibians have pigmentation spots like some sea mammals.



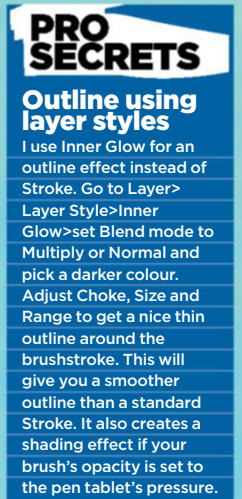
13 All but characters

I detail the background and add more seaweed. Foreground elements help to bring the viewer into the scene. I put the caustic layer on the seaweed and, using a mask, erase it everywhere except for the lit places. With my spots brush I paint bubbles on a separate layer. To create a simple lighting effect I use Inner Glow and Inner Shadow in the bubble layer style.



14 Final colour correction

I do some overall colour adjustment. I try different colour gradients and blending modes until I'm happy. When the image is done, I select all and copy (Ctrl+Shift+C) to a new layer. Then I apply Unsharp Mask to this layer to make the details pop. And this is it! I hope you've enjoyed this workshop and learned something new. Cheers!





21st Century Tank
Girl artist Brett
Parson brings the
anarchist to the
IFX cover!

Brett Parson 1/4

TANK GIRL



Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX



Indie Comics

★ Enter the highly personal world of creative comics beyond the mainstream



All this... and more!



Fiona Staples

The Canadian all-rounder speaks about developing her style, the ongoing Saga and winning all the awards!



Ken Lashley

The DC artist reveals his quirky side, with sketches a world away from average supes.



Hellboy

French caricature artist Jean-Sebastien Monge takes on the little devil, in his own unique way.

Fables of Tintin

Belgian's most famous blonde gets a makeover by Fables cover artist Nimit Malavia.

Lewis LaRosa

Interpret scripts and lay out pages to maximise clear storytelling and dramatic impact.



ISSUE 128 ON SALE *Friday 9 October*







Photoshop CREATE A VIDEO GAME BOSS CHARACTER

Jie Gao uses a range of lighting and colouring techniques to illustrate a Blizzard-style end-of-level video game boss

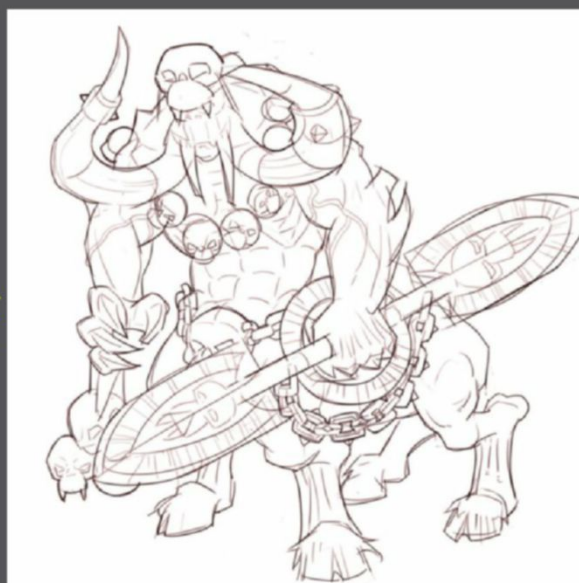
When I receive an invitation from a commissioning editor I begin thinking of what I want to show and what are the best aspects of my art. Out of all the styles I draw in, fantasy is my favourite. I always really enjoy the process. In this case I really want to show how to use Photoshop to make a fantasy illustration.

Illustration is used everywhere in the game industry and most of the time designers and illustrators use Photoshop to create this art – as do I!

This example here took me around 20 hours. I was aiming to paint a boss character standing in front of the Holy Well, which produces some mysterious liquid. The boss is tasting the liquid,

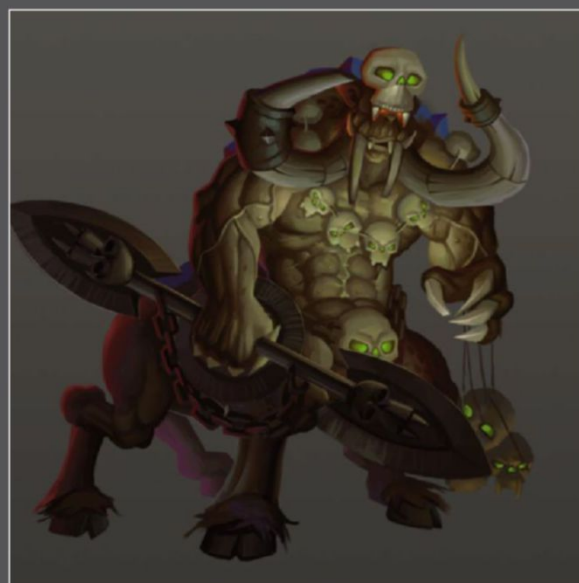
while some of the crows are also interested in sampling it. The liquid is made from the bodies of another species he defeated in battle.

A night-time setting helps make the atmosphere look more mysterious. I used the green, blue and orange lighting to build this image. Most of the shadows are produced with these colours.



1 Line sketch

I try various compositions before selecting this one, which I'm most happy with. The basic ideas of the skin and details of the boss are inspired by Blizzard Entertainment's World of Warcraft. The most important point about the sketch step is to ensure every single line looks confident.



2 Adding basic colour

I add some basic colour, ensuring that all of the colours look varied and yet also harmonious. I often try to make the natural colours change gradually. In this case there are variations depending on where they are on the character's body.

Artist PROFILE

Jie Gao
COUNTRY: US



Previously lead concept designer at Beijing's NetEase, Jie is currently an intern at Ubisoft in San Francisco. <http://ifxm.ag/jiegao>

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!

PRO SECRETS

Make a mirror

I often mirror my art in Photoshop when I zoom in to draw details. It's a cool way to see the changes in the canvas as you zoom in and out.

Shortcuts

Adjust colour

Ctrl+B (PC)

Cmd+B (Mac)

I find this is a really efficient way to make colour changes.

6

CUSTOM BRUSHES!

INCLUDING

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

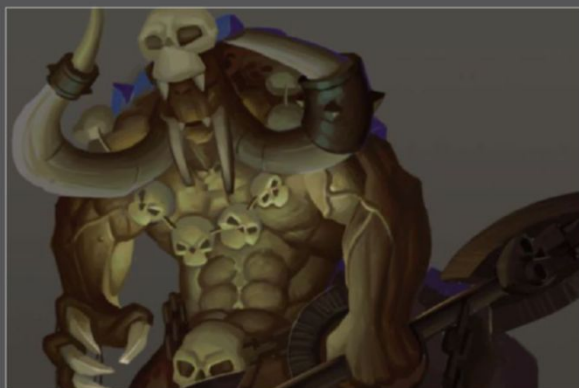
PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH:
HARD ROUND 40 1

This is the brush I use most of time when I'm painting in Photoshop.

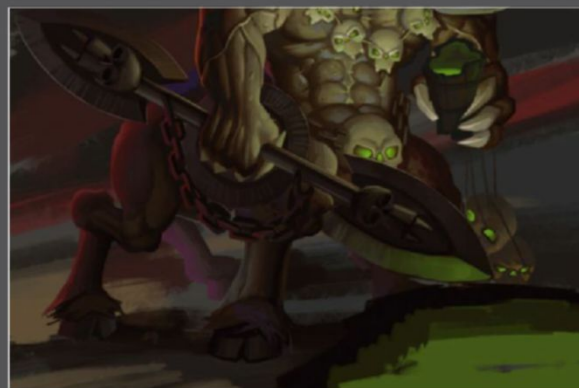
HARD SQUARE 22
PIXELS 1

I often use this custom brush drawing stones, bushes or trees.



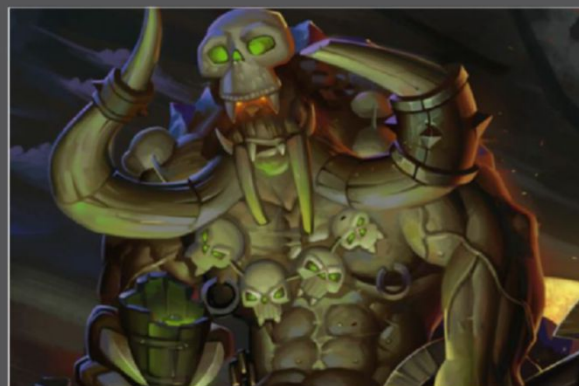
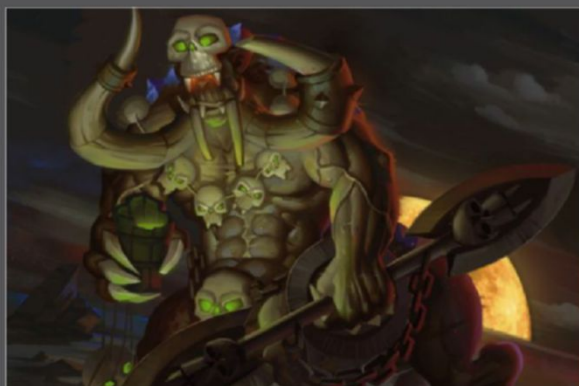
3 Environment colour

I start to add more influence from the lighting and shadow of the background to the main colours. I continue to ensure the structures of the body look right, make sure there are no glaring errors which will be hard to fix later on, and add more details to the character for visual interest. Even at this early stage, the final version of your vision should be taking shape.



4 Basic background

I add some core details to the background. I take time to think about the composition and ensure it better serves the main character. The background should be lit differently to the figure. I try to give it some more momentum and I add some dramatic elements in the foreground. I add the Holy Well, which also works as a light source.

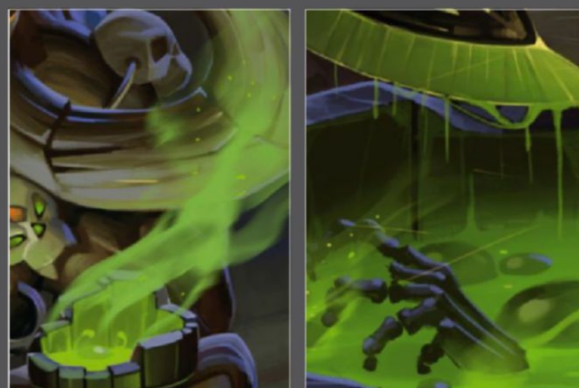
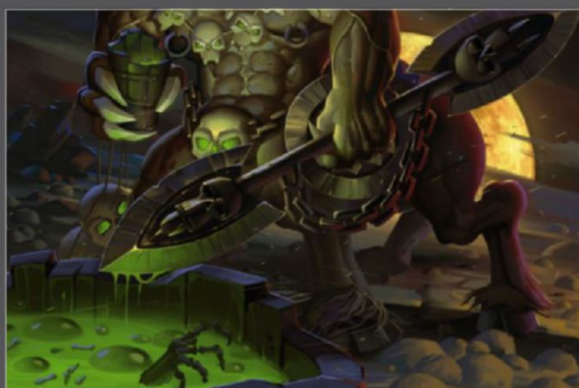


5 Background details

In this step, I try to make the background look as credible as the main character does. Every illustration tells a specific story. Try to make everything you do to your painting help make the story more engaging. I add some texture in the foreground and a fantasy moon behind the main character.

6 Back to the boss

I come back to the boss's body and continue to add more details. The thing to keep in mind is to ensure every single detail improves the overall image. The most important point in this step is to make sure the details are as perfect as possible.

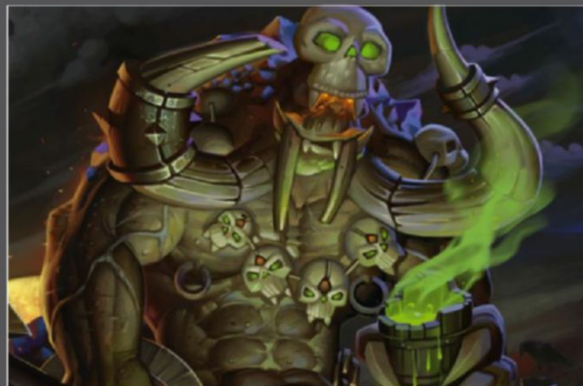


7 Enrich the elements

To add visual interest, I add some crows into the mix and some skeletal fingers poking out of the Holy Well. I also add some liquid to the well and some skulls to the ground. It's a good habit to zoom out regularly and stop playing with details, to sure that the image is developing exactly as you want it.

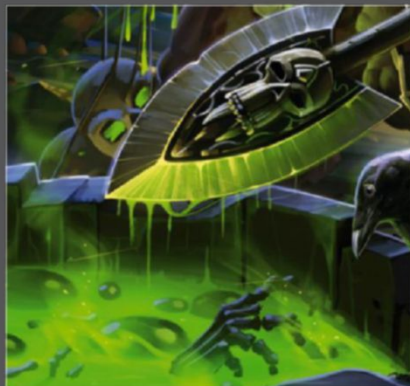
8 Giving it some gas

I add some vapours to make the liquid look more mysterious. One thing you need to keep in mind is to use a new layer for gas or other airborne particles. It's very convenient if you need to change things later on. The gas should look natural. If you don't have ideas about how to draw realistic gas, look for some reference photos online.



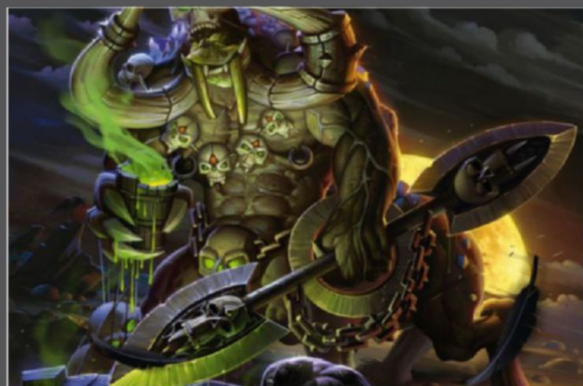
9 Back to details

Most of the eye-catching art I see online is rich in detail, and so I try to do the same here. It often takes a couple of rounds to add all the details – you often can't paint them in all at once. You should use three to five steps to add all the details you think the painting needs.



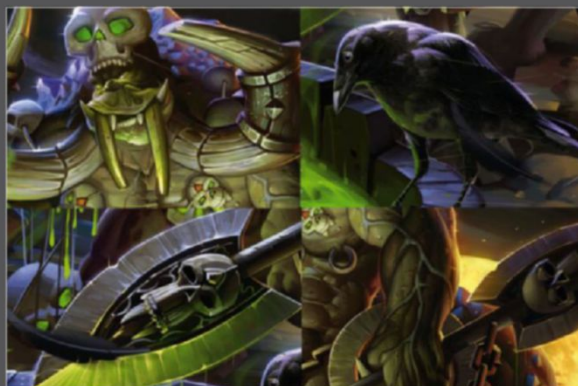
10 Introduce some particles

I often use airborne particles, which is a good choice for enriching the image. In the real world, there are many tiny particles floating in the air. The particles are more obvious in unnatural lighting, and the background is darker than the foreground.



11 Adjust lightness and colour

After a couple of passes adding details, I come back to the bigger picture to adjust the lightness and colour. In this step, you should remember that the purpose is to create more levels of lightness and darkness in your image. Keep in mind that it's better to minimise the use of photo textures.



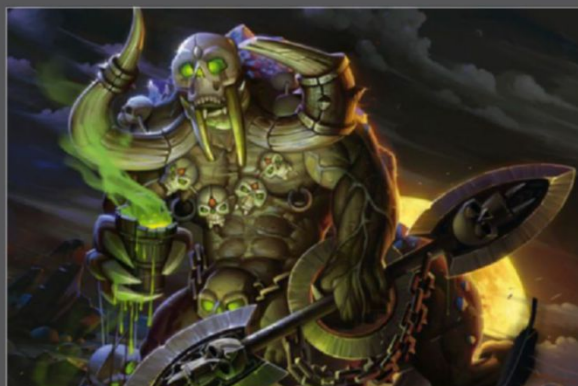
12 Back to details again

Even though it's a digital piece of art, I often try to imitate textures from the real world, such as an oil painting. I would rather do some brushwork on the image. It's better that all of the image looks smooth. In this step, I mainly focus on brushwork and making my strokes look confident.



13 Find the quirks

In this step, I flip the canvas and continue to adjust the image. When we're very used to seeing an image in one way, we struggle to see any issues it may have easily. When I flip the canvas though, it's always refreshing to my eyes and I can find more quirks and errors – whether it be the proportions, the composition or something else.



14 Final adjustments

I check everything and ensure all of the elements and details serve the overall image well. I sharpen parts of image in the foreground and blur some parts of the image in the background. I adjust the overall colour relationship and lightness again. The key point is do it after a couple of days, ensuring you have a clear and fresh mind when you do it.

PRO SECRETS

Flip the canvas

Whenever I have become used to seeing the image a certain way I flip the canvas and continue to make adjustments. This technique always refreshes my eyes and mind a lot. This way you can find more issues with the proportions, construction, colour, composition and others. I do this throughout the whole process.



ESSENTIAL ART RESOURCES
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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews

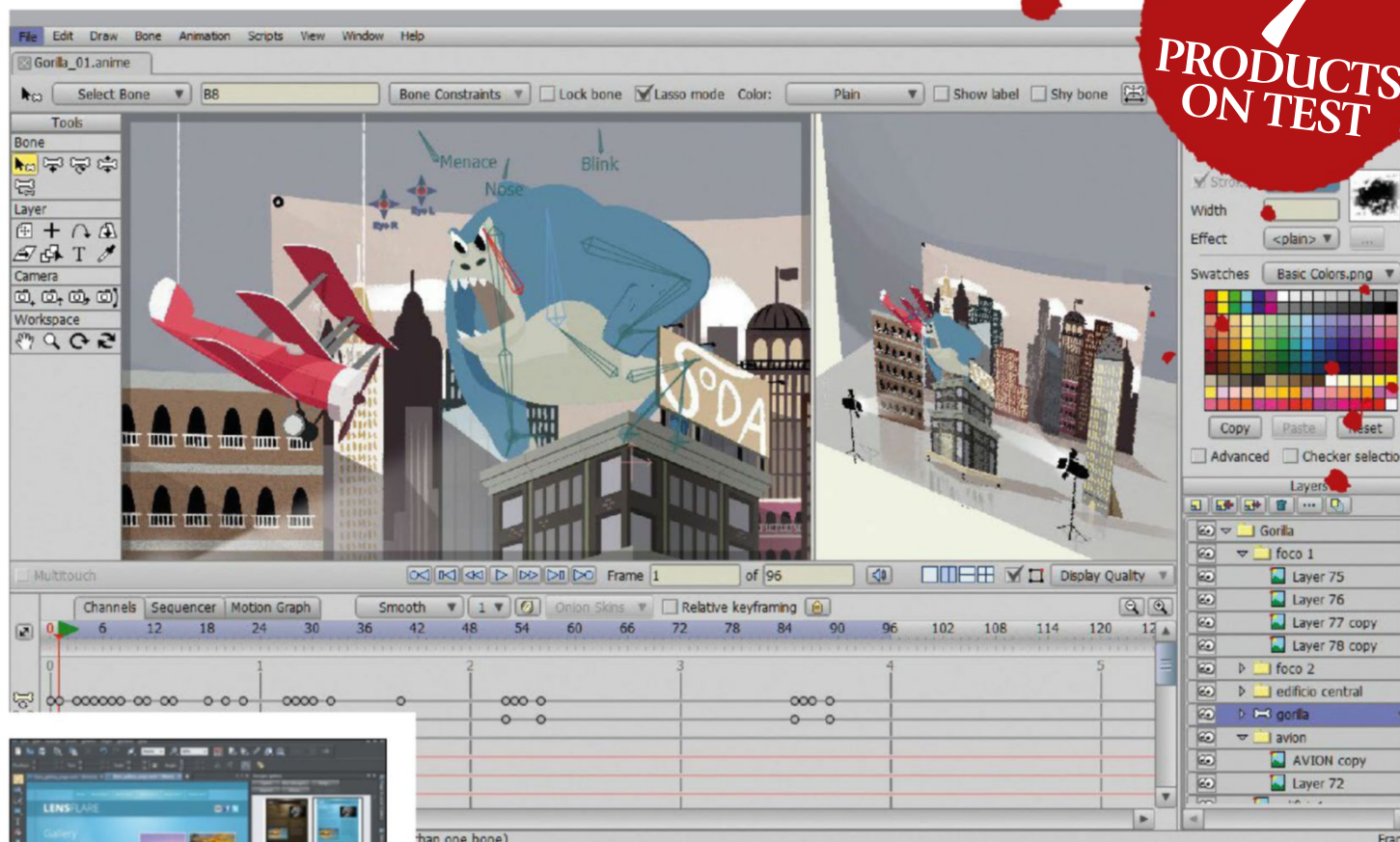


Artist's Choice Award

Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...

7
PRODUCTS
ON TEST



SOFTWARE

92 Anime Studio Pro 11

The software is already well loved – we find out if the new tools and features, tweaks and updates make it a worthwhile upgrade.

94 Web Designer 11

How you can set up a bespoke online gallery with Xara's software.

94 PaintShop Pro X8 Ultimate

Corel's image-editing software receives its annual update – but can it now compete with Photoshop?

TRAINING

95 Figure Fundamentals Volume 1

Lowbrow artist Van Arno uses his ability to freeze time in a beginner-friendly guide to drawing from life.



BOOKS

96 New reads

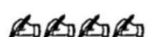
Women of Wonder; Out of Line: The Art of Jules Feiffer; The Big Bad World of Concept Art for Video Games.



RATINGS EXPLAINED



Magnificent



Great



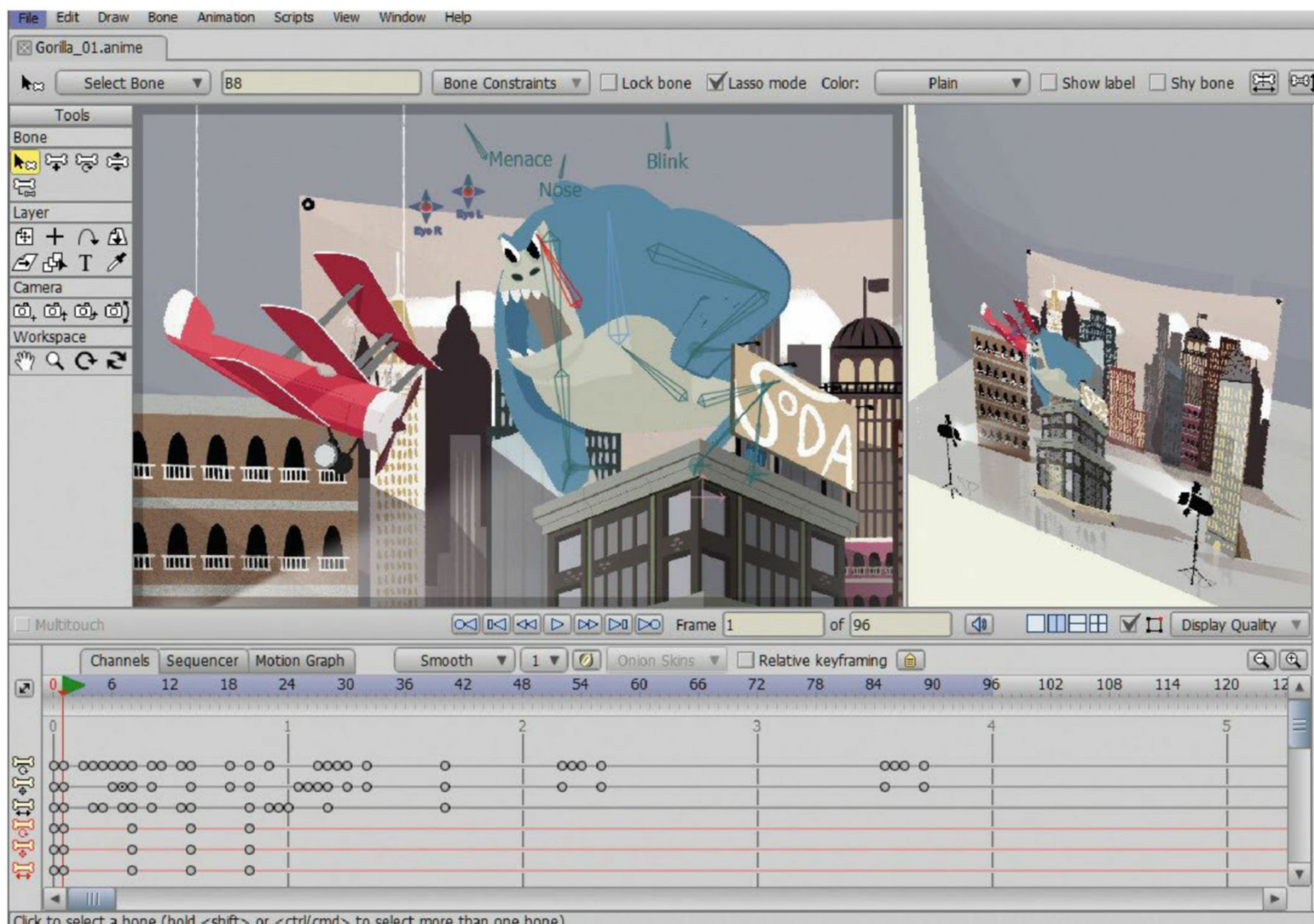
Good



Poor



Atrocious



Anime Studio Pro 11

PRO ART The software is already well loved, but will new tools and features, tweaks and updates make it worth an upgrade for artists?

MAC
&
PC

Anime Studio Pro 11 has some useful workflow tools, and the split 2D/3D workspace is high on that list.

Price £200 (upgrade from £96) **Company** Smith Micro **Web** <http://my.smithmicro.com>



Depth and detail comes easily to version 11, especially with the new layer management tools.

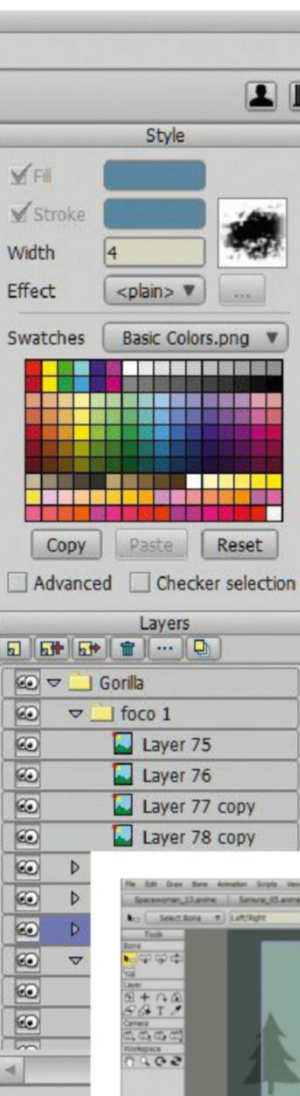
Anime Studio Pro 11 takes what was already a well-loved and strong toolset, and adds a number of welcome new tools and features, not to mention a raft of tweaks, updates and enhancements.

The big new features and updates to the toolset and workflow are layer based. While Anime Studio isn't new to a layered workspace, there have been some areas that needed a bit extra and version 11 doesn't disappoint.

XRef layers, or layer referencing, and shape ordering Frame-by-frame animation are all new, and alone make the upgrade worthwhile. When referencing layers, if a change is made to one layer the changes flow through,

which can save a lot of duplicating. Similarly, being able to quickly animate the order of your shapes will make for a less-cluttered workspace and a much more navigable scene.

Improved camera movements mean no warping and or stretching, and if you're working within a 3D scene you can display the axis handles. Now it's much easier to navigate and get your bearings. This leads on to the 3D aspects of the software. It's a simple import job to load up any .OBJ file, bringing in textures and UVs. What's more, understandably given they're both from the same company, you can import Poser scenes directly, enabling you to animate with Anime Studio. This is a big plus for artists who like to stay



Victor Paredes' artwork, created in Anime Studio 11, adorns the boxed copy of the software.



Various brush, vector and asset styles make for a wide array of render styles.



The bones system comes complete with labelling, making it easy to navigate a scene without digging through menus.

“This all adds up to a piece of software that does as much to get out of your way and let you stay creative as it can”

within a given ecosystem, or who won't be creating 3D assets themselves.

Along with the scene and camera updates the preview render options now make it possible to create a quick preview that has no antialiasing. In practice this is fantastic, as previews are great for checking timings and flow.

In addition to all the creative tool updates there are usability tweaks, starting with a new pre-flighting system that collates all your media into a single directory. Improved exporting

options mean that rendering is a far tidier experience than before, so you can take a look at the huge, expanded content library to start your next project much sooner.

What this all adds up to is a piece of software that does as much to get out of your way and let you stay creative as it can. Many of the laborious tasks have been removed or reduced significantly, and you're much more free to concentrate on what matters: creating art and telling stories.

DETAILS

Features

- Frame-by-frame
- 35mm camera equivalent
- Bones system
- Comprehensive import/export options
- 3D workspace
- Layer reference system

System Requirements

PC: Windows 7 or later, 64-bit OS, 1.3GHz, Athlon 64, 2GB RAM, 1,024x768 display
Mac: OS X 10.8 or later, 64-bit OS, 1.3GHz Intel Processor, 2GB RAM, 1,024x768 display

Rating



ARTIST INTERVIEW

VICTOR PAREDES

The artist and animator on what he likes about Anime Studio

When did you start using AS?

I started with version 4 of Moho – the name Anime Studio had those days. I was looking for something better than Flash, as I never felt comfortable with it.

What made you choose it as your animation tool?

Bones. Bones were awesome, even when they weren't 10 per cent of what they are now. But it was also the subversive way Moho worked. It was independent, with its own philosophy. It didn't copy other software. Nothing inside Anime Studio is predefined, so you can experiment. And people share new tricks and techniques. That freedom is one of its greatest features.

Is there a feature you couldn't do without?

There are many, but Frame-by-frame is one. Yet I think the software's appeal comes from the combination of the tools. Bone rigging is extremely powerful, easy to use and always improving. For example, combining rigging with Frame-by-frame gives you great results and new workflows you didn't imagine before.

Talk us through your process...

It varies, but we often start with an idea and make a simple animatic for it, in Anime Studio. Then an illustrator makes the characters and backgrounds using Manga Studio or Photoshop. I receive the characters as images and redraw and rig them inside Anime Studio, then export animated characters as MOV files with Alpha, then a partner puts characters, background, effects and so on together, using After Effects.

What's the key part of Anime Studio 11 for your work?

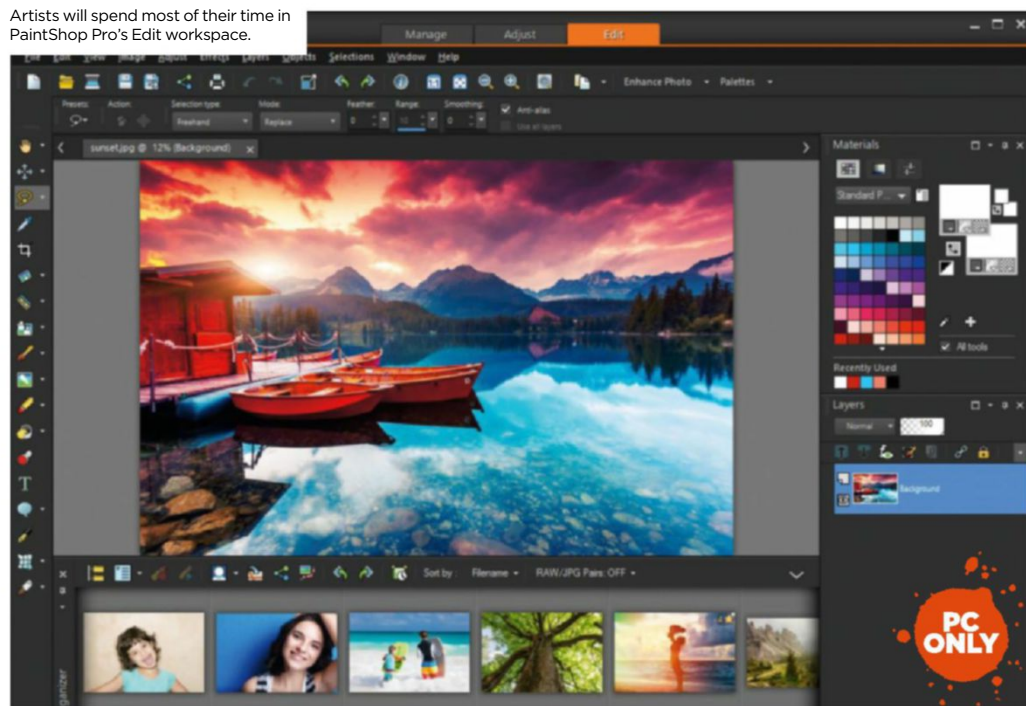
There are two: Frame-by-frame and References. A new version is good when I ask: how did I survive for so long without this feature? And I feel that about both these features.



Anime Studio artist and animator Victor was chosen to create the cover art for Anime Studio 11.

www.youtube.com/tazatrisme

Artists will spend most of their time in PaintShop Pro's Edit workspace.



PaintShop Pro X8 Ultimate

GOING SHOPPING Corel's image editing software gets updated – but is it still aiming to compete with Photoshop?

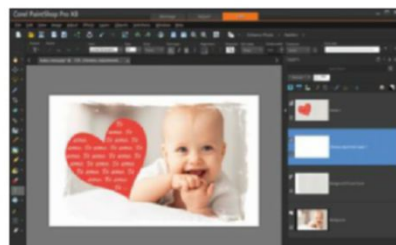
Price £80 **Company** Corel **Web** www.paintshoppro.com

PaintShop Pro has been regarded by some as the poor man's Photoshop, a little unfair as it's good software in its own right. In fact, in the late 1990s and early 2000s it was immensely popular as it offered powerful features such as clone tools, picture tubes and animated GIFs.

Booting up the latest version, X8, brings with it a pleasant tingle of nostalgia for anyone who's used the software before. The selection tools and menu options haven't changed much in 15 years, even if the interface has been given an Adobe-esque dark grey makeover, and vector editing is now available within the software.

New features include a Magic Move tool. Select something you want to shift in an image, move it, and PaintShop Pro will automatically fill in the gap. It works well, particularly on images with nondescript backgrounds such as beaches or fields. It's useful for quickly rearranging non-layered images and saves you aeons of fiddling with the clone stamp in Photoshop.

Minor tweaks include a better approach to layers, complete with a search function, 4K monitor support and camera lens correction. PaintShop Pro has always lagged behind Photoshop in terms of performance,



but thankfully X8 gives it a 64-bit boost so it can handle large images and complicated brushes. While we're talking brushes, it's compatible with the masses of user-created brushes available for Photoshop.

The Ultimate edition includes a raft of additional software. Aftershot adds non-destructive RAW photo editing. Perfectly Clear is a one-click autotune for your images, while Perfect Effects acts like Instagram filters on steroids. The royalty-free images and extra brushes included make it worth the extra £20 over the standard edition.

The core software is solid enough, and definitely more suitable for digital artists than the similarly priced Photoshop Elements. It does feel scrappier and more poorly organised than Photoshop CC, but it's far cheaper. So yes, it's still a poor man's Photoshop. But that's really not necessarily a bad thing. 🍷

Complex images are a cinch with the new layers palette.

DETAILS

Features

- 32- and 64-bit versions
- Text wrapping
- Magic Move tool
- Batch processing
- 4K monitor support
- Lens correction
- Camera RAW lab
- Smart selection brush
- Photoshop image and brush file support
- Free software including Aftershot, Athentech Perfectly Clear, Perfect Effects

System Requirements

PC: Windows 7 or later, Intel/AMD 1.5 GHz or faster processor, 2GB RAM, 1GB hard disk space

Rating



Create a neat showcase of your finest fantasy art with the software's gallery function.



Web Designer 11

DISPLAY SPACE Set up a bespoke online gallery with Xara's software

Price From £35

Company Xara

Web www.xara.com

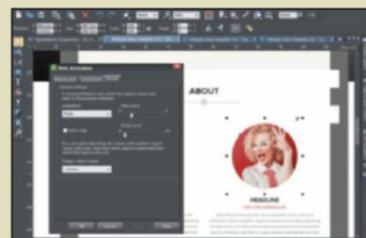
RATING 🍷🍷🍷

Digital artists are spoilt for choice when it comes to online galleries. Behance and deviantART have become popular hosts for sci-fi and fantasy images, and even social networking sites can become repositories of your finest works. There's still something to be said for having your own professional website though, with an easy-to-remember address and bespoke design.

Xara's Web Designer promises to take the headaches out of HTML and make design straightforward. A peek at sample sites shows wide photos which stretch across the site, minimalist navigation and a responsive design to make it easy to navigate on mobile devices (though these are exclusive to the £70 premium version).

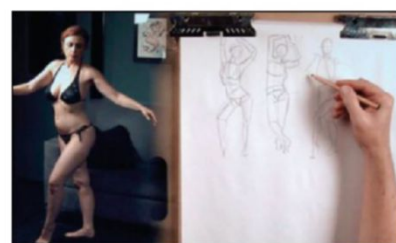
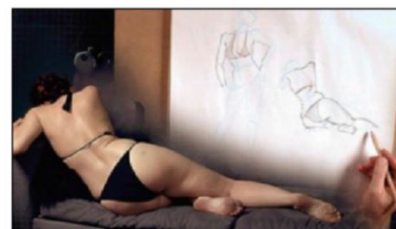
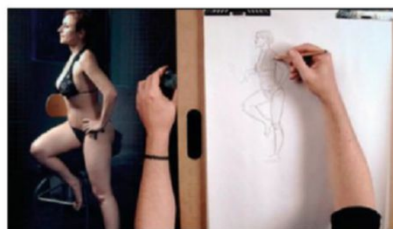
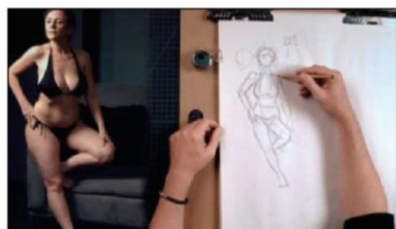
A team of coders would usually be required to put together such a site, but with Web Designer it's a doddle. Adding text and images is as intuitive as any desktop publishing or word processing software, while specific features include a neat overview of pages so you won't lose that contact form.

Even with the most basic version you'll have a decent site and gallery up and running in minutes.



Creating a site normally needing a team of coders is easy (for a fee) with Web Designer 11.

Van explains figure drawing from the very basics, like the use of the head size to measure other body proportions.



In Figure Fundamentals, Van Arno sketches a model in a series of poses to explain important concepts.



Figure Fundamentals Volume 1

TIME LORD Lowbrow artist Van Arno uses his ability to freeze time in a beginner-friendly guide to drawing from life

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** \$59 **Format** Download **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

Plenty of artists, particularly those who are self-taught, have never taken the chance to draw figures from life – and if you haven't, then you're seriously missing out. Van Arno's video takes the fear factor out of what might seem like an intimidating undertaking.

In this first volume, Van goes through a series of poses with a female model (a second volume with a male model is also available to download). Van keeps the video about as simple as you can get, using each pose to drum home the basics and build on key concepts, referring to body parts in plain English rather than complicated anatomical terms.

Each drawing starts with a single line: the gesture. Van uses this to underpin the drawing with a sense of life, with each subsequent line supporting the initial gesture. Through split-screen video, you're able to see the model at all times while Van draws,



DETAILS

Topics covered

- Gesture lines
- Simple figure construction
- Proportions and foreshortening
- Finding landmarks
- Negative space
- Overlapping forms
- Shadows and highlights

Length
172 minutes

Rating



so you can see how the creative decisions he makes relates to the real human form. (You could also try drawing the on-screen model yourself.)

Van advises you to draw what you see, not what you think you should see. Occasionally he triggers a 'stop time', to freeze the model so he can explain effects such as foreshortening, where not observing the model correctly can lead to distorted proportions.

During later poses, Van also explains how looking at negative space can make some poses – like a hand on the hip – easier to draw, and why it's important to pay attention to areas where one form overlaps another.

Van returns to the same core ideas with each pose, so experienced artists may find the video a little simplistic and repetitive. But for the less experienced, the format enables you to see how essential concepts apply in different situations. Next stop: hire a model yourself (or with a group of artist friends). You'll never look back.

ARTIST PROFILE VAN ARNO

Based in Los Angeles, Van Arno is a figurative painter whose work has been displayed internationally for almost 20 years. His background includes illustration, amusement park design, game art, animation and character design. Van's paintings have frequently been featured in the alternative art magazine Juxtapoz and included in a national survey of Lowbrow painters. Van focuses on the figure and its power to engage the viewer,



www.vanarno.com

and he harbours an ongoing fascination with propaganda imagery and its use of the heroic figure.



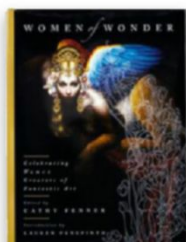
Women of Wonder

WONDER VISION A new collection of the finest minds currently working in fantasy and sci-fi art – irrespective of gender

Editor Cathy Fenner **Publisher** Underwood Books **Price** £16 **Web** www.underwoodbooks.com **Available Now**

That such a thing should need to be pointed out at all in 2015 is unfortunate, but purely for any knee-jerk genderphobes out there, there's no need to fear. Cathy Fenner has not put together this collection of work from women artists as some kind of unlikely attempt to finally overthrow the patriarchy and end the clueless domination of men after millennia of civilisation mismanagement.

Fenner states in her introduction that this is a celebration of contemporary women artists in the fantasy field, people who have triumphed in a competitive industry irrespective of gender. And what a



Fantasy paintings by Laurie Lee Brom (left) and LD Austin are included in the book.

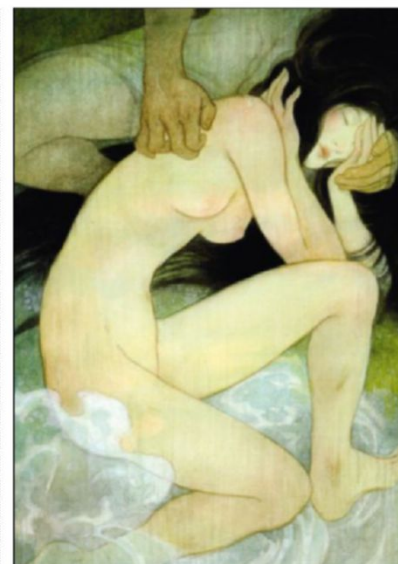


quality celebration it is, as we have come to expect from Underwood, the publishers that launched the trailblazing Spectrum art collections.

Coming from those famous supporters of fantastic sketchers, it's fundamentally a showcase for 60 or so notable names. Many ImagineFX regulars are included, such as Terryll Whitlatch, Cynthia Sheppard and Mélanie Delon – in fact there's even an ImagineFX cover in there!

Every name (or partnership) is given a spread, so we don't get a wide array of work from each, rather a single image they feel best represents their work and a quote – varying from a sentence to a manifesto – on how they feel about their place in the art world. Long-gone female pioneers such as Margaret Brundage, 'Queen of Pulp Pin-up Art' are also represented, with carefully chosen quotes to show what made them great.

There's a wide array of practitioners included, and many have hugely opposing attitudes to their work, and even to this book. Like most areas of our culture, the male skew on fantasy, folklore and sci-fi has barely been questioned before, so it's good to see 'visual storytellers' with different tales to tell, telling them so expressively – be it Kei Acedera's charming sea



American artist Rebecca Léveillé-Guay's tender painting has clear Renaissance influences.

monster, LD Austin's steel-plated Warrior Queen (left), or Lisa Falkenstern's comical pig rider. Each spread leaves you wanting more.

As a snapshot of women on the visual fantasy scene in 2015, Women of Wonder is the first such book to focus on this one artistic group and a collection many will cherish.

RATING

Out of Line: The Art of Jules Feiffer

LINE ART The finest wit and cartoonist you've probably never heard of – Jules Feiffer is a relatively unheralded comic art legend

Author Martha Fay **Publisher** Abrams Books **Price** £25 **Web** www.abramsbooks.com **Available** Now

To the UK's detriment, there are few people over here who are fans of Jules Feiffer, unless they were lucky enough to stumble across his most famous work: the illustrations for the children's classic novel *The Phantom Tollbooth*.

His sophisticated milieu, of mid-20th-century New York, particularly his celebrated work for *The Village Voice*, may not have any mainstream foothold



One of the many drawing styles – this one being cleaner than most – that Jules experimented with during his career.



on this side of the Pond. But anyone interested in the history of comics should celebrate that Martha Fay's book enables them to gain a holistic insight into his career in one fell swoop.

Jules started out after WWII, providing bubbles for 10-a-penny hero comic strips. Then he established his own snarky series, *Clifford*, and went on to be valued for his hip metropolitan philosophy, with a loose sketchy style and freedom to present his thoughts however he liked. So there's a wide

range of artistic genres on display here, the very best extracts from his archive reproduced alongside Martha's easy, personable prose, packed with insight taken from the man himself.

This fascinating treasure trove strikes one sad note, the foreword being written by Mike Nichols (director of Jules-scripted film *Carnal Knowledge*) before his untimely death. That aside, this is a hilarious collection for hip cats.

RATING

The Big Bad World of Concept Art for Video Games

HOW TO The pitfalls and pleasures of defining the look of the next generation of gaming – according to a triple-A games artist

Author Elliott Lilly **Publisher** Design Studio Press **Price** £20 **Web** www.designstudiopress.com **Available** Now

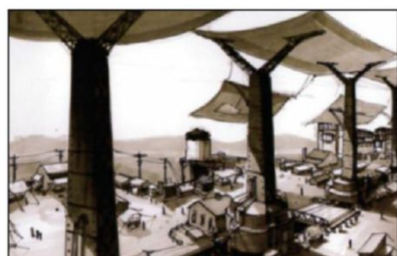
This is a personal guide to the snakes and ladders of the budding concept artist's lot. Elliott Lilly, who also designed the book, has worked his way up to shaping the look of big names like *Doom* and *Call of Duty*, and certainly knows his way around the depiction of enormous guns. But has this new venture been worth his time?



Although not in any way a dense book, Lilly's text is friendly and honest, and there's a sense of him looking over your shoulder as he guides you from the front door to the top floor. He shares his failures as well as successes, giving very practical tips on amassing an unbeatable portfolio, working alongside different art departments, and just how tough it can be to make it anywhere as a concept artist. There's some art advice, but the emphasis is

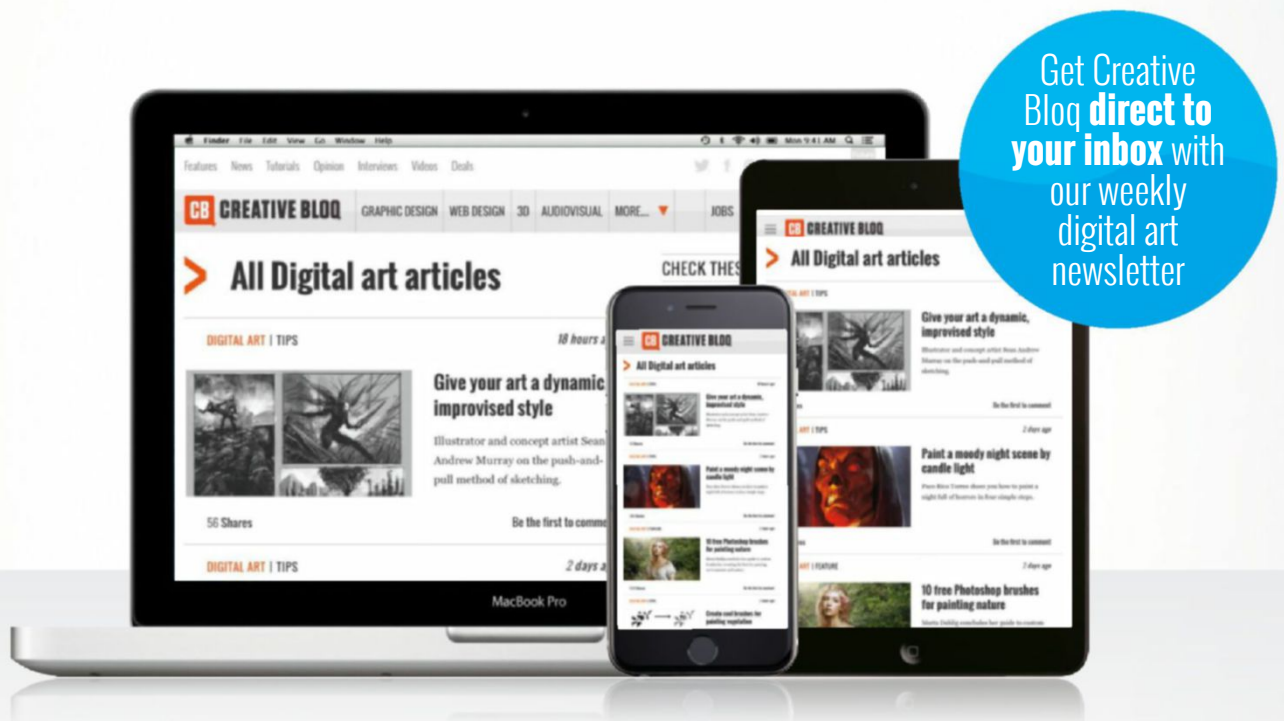
on what Elliott's learned about the industry over the years, which makes the book more interesting. He's also gone out of his way to talk to some of his best contacts in the business including David Levy, Stephan Martiniere and Sparth, and their combined knowledge is a handy 'how to' for newbies, but also a fresh angle for experienced concept artists.

RATING



Elliott's portfolio advice includes ensuring consistency between the orientation of your portrait and landscape artwork.

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DISCOVER HOW TO...

PAINT THE FAMILIAR AFRESH

Michael C Hayes uses movement and scale to evoke a sense of awe **Page 104**

This issue:



100 FXPosé Traditional
The best traditional art revealed.



106 Dramatic lighting
James Gurney on location.



112 Colour and detail
Brynn Metheney's animal tips.



114 First impressions
William Stout talks dinosaurs.

FXPosé *Traditional*

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

Linda Adair

LOCATION: Australia
WEB: www.lindaadair.com
EMAIL: info@lindaadair.com
MEDIA: Oils



Traditional oil painter Linda specialises in imaginary realism. "I enjoy creating a narrative in my work," she says, "suggesting a story, but leaving it open to the viewer's imagination."

Having travelled a fair bit, Linda's experiences help inform her art. "Getting out and experiencing life is second only to practice when it comes to educating your art and fuelling creativity," she believes.

"I'm drawn to the tactile nature of traditional media, and oils in particular are so versatile." Some of her influences are illustrators such as Cornwell, Leyendecker, Pyle and NC Wyeth.

Linda is drawn to themes from history, lore and legend – things that have some basis in reality. "Often, it's simply a springboard for the imagination," she says.



1 MESSENGERS

Oil on panel, 16x20in

"This one is part of a triptych, set in the waning autumn when the swans would migrate. Their wings make them free, but they aren't. Earthbound and trapped, beautiful and hunted. This man is connected to them, can feel what they feel and can control them."

2 THE QUEEN OF THE NORTH

Oil on panel, 16x20in

"I was trying to encapsulate the thrill of the northern mountains and the loneliness. My character is strong, in command, and not afraid of her precarious position."

3 THE CONSTANT MAN 1920

Oil on panel, 10x10in

"This is part of a personal project and is one of a set of 12 paintings chronicling the adventures of the Constant Man. He's a robot Casanova-type character who is the perfect man. Keep an eye out for the Kickstarter launch soon!"

4 NECROMANCER

Oil on panel, 12x24in

"I wanted to feel her intensity and movement, capturing a glimpse into this graveyard ritual."





IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Linda certainly knows a thing or two about how to do engagingly surreal. She's clearly very competent at anatomy, too, and her figures are often in striking, intriguing poses."

Clifford Hope,
Operations Editor

Canada Serena Malyon

LOCATION: Canada

WEB: www.serenamalyon.com

EMAIL: serenamalyon@gmail.com

MEDIA: Watercolour, Photoshop



Serena graduated from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 2012, and since then has been working for various magazines, book publishers and design firms.

"Fantasy, young adult and children's illustration are my passion," says the Calgary-based artist. "I take a lot of inspiration from medieval art and the golden age of illustration. These eras really influence my style and narrative."

Her paintings are done in watercolour and edited in Photoshop, where edges are cleaned up. "This method allows me to paint quickly and change elements easily," she says.

1 VALAR MORGHULIS

Watercolour, Photoshop, 17x25in

"This illustration follows the path of Arya in *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George RR Martin. It chronicles all of the death that she's encountered on her journey. I've included every target on her list and every person that she has killed."

2 THE PLUNDERING OF AIRLIE

Watercolour, Photoshop, 9x11.25in

"This piece illustrates the Scottish folk song, *The Bonnie House of Airlie*. The song follows Lady Margaret, whose castle is plundered by the Scottish Lord Argyll and his army. Argyll takes Lady Margaret to the top of the town and then forces her to watch the plundering of Airlie."

3 THUMBELINA

Watercolour, Photoshop, 18x12.25in

"This is an illustration of the fairy tale of Thumbelina. In the story, a tiny girl gets abducted by several toads, who wish to marry her to their prince. She's their prisoner, trapped upon a lily pad, until some little fish free her."



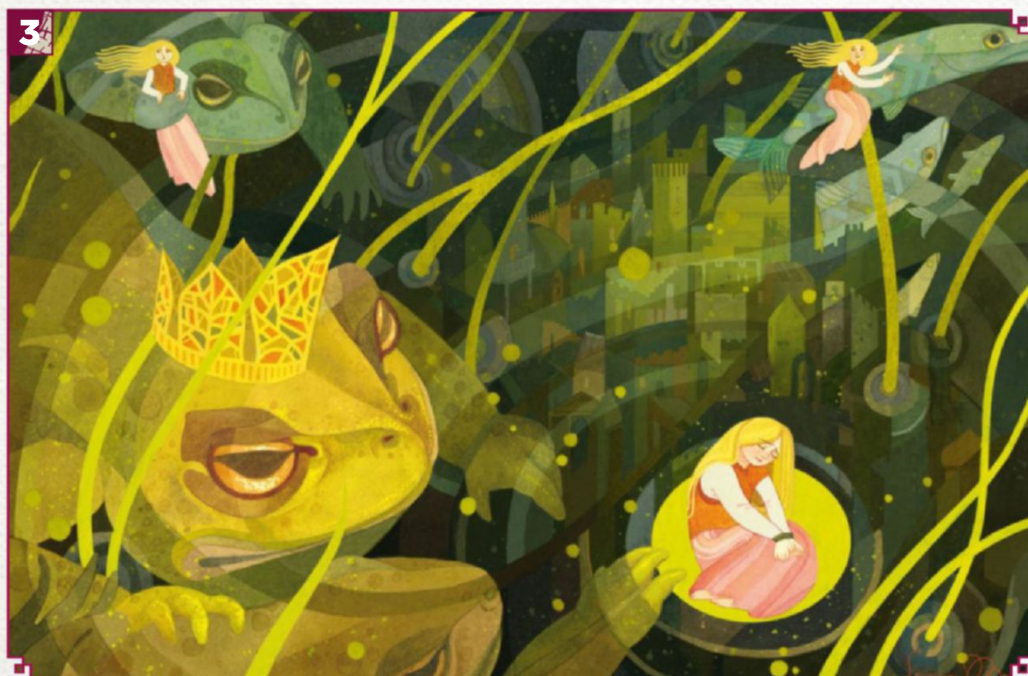


IMAGINEFX CRIT



"I love how Serena's art sucks you into the painting, lured by a combination of astute lighting and wonderful details that are a joy to explore. There's some very strong storytelling present, too."

Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor



SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

Email: fxpose@imaginefx.com
(maximum 1MB per image)

Post: (CD or DVD):
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ImagineFX
30 Monmouth Street
Bath
BA1 2BW, UK

All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

Oils

PAINT THE FAMILIAR AFRESH

MICHAEL C HAYES uses movement and scale to evoke a sense of awe in a familiar subject

Angels are a recurring theme in my work. This is certainly not the first, second or even 10th time I've taken on this subject, nor am I by any means the first artist in history to do so. Because it's such a familiar subject, the challenge of engaging my audience is even bigger, due to their potential apathy.

I have to prove to them, in a split second, that they should care about this painting of an angel. I have to make it more than just the sum of its parts. Bearing this in mind, I set out to evoke awe, by making the painting really be

about scale and movement. The angel will become merely the vehicle by which I portray these concepts.

From the very beginning I know that I want to suggest scale by having the angel's wings envelope the entire frame and have her emerging from an atmospheric mist. I also think about how I could suggest movement with strong diagonals in the composition, an acrobatic gesture and secondary elements such as trailing hair and fabric.



After several years as a freelance artist Michael C Hayes now paints entirely for himself. www.artofmike.com

RADIATING LINE COMPOSITION

This entire composition is built from arcing lines that radiate from the bottom-left corner of the image. Note how the gesture of the figure, the flight patterns of the birds, and even the feathers of angel's wings bow towards that single point.

ATMOSPHERIC PERSPECTIVE

After painting the first layers with Galkyd Lite, I layed down a semi-transparent glaze of Gamblin Neo-Megilp and transparent white which blended into a transparent earth tone glaze. While that layer was still wet I worked into it with opaque paints.

Step by Step: Getting the colours right



1 GATHERING REFERENCE

Often during a photoshoot with a model I'll take plenty of pictures and experiment with different poses and variations. This results in lots of extra reference, and this image was created with recycled scrap reference from past projects. As for the birds, I spend a lot of my free time at the zoo. Stock photos fill in the gaps.



2 CREATING A DETAILED PRELIMINARY

I usually make my sketches about a third to half the overall size of the final. In this case the sketch was 12x18 inches and the painting was 20x30 inches. For these I use tuscan red Col-Erase pencil, white charcoal and either pre-toned paper or a cotton paper that I tone with a wash of watercolour.



3 DIGITAL COLOUR STUDY

A digital study enables me to experiment with a range of colour schemes. I scan in my pencil study and then create a separate mask for all the different elements. It's a tedious step, but I can then adjust everything separately with adjustment layers such as Levels, Color, Soft Light and Color Balance.

ANGELIC GLOW

Applying the effect of a bright light is as much about using contrast as it is about using saturated colour in your shadows. I'm using almost pure cadmiums yellows, oranges and reds in the dark areas.

INDICATING FEATHER STRUCTURE

With so many birds to paint, I wasn't going to be rendering every feather. Bird wings have a specific anatomy, and their feathers group together in different layers and positions. Paint the larger feather structures and indicate feathers with brushwork, and it'll go much quicker.

MATERIALS

BRUSHES

- Royal Langnickel Sabletek filberts
- Robert Simmons white nylon #0 rounds
- Blick Wonder White filberts and flats

PAINTS

- Winsor Newton, Rembrandt and Holbein artist quality oils

MEDIUMS

- Gamblin Odorless mineral spirits (OMS)
- Gamblin 1/2 Galkyd Lite and 1/2 OMS
- Gamblin Galkyd Slow Dry
- Gamblin Neo-Megilp





**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
See page 6 now!

FANTASY illustrator Workshops

Casein

PAINT DRAMATIC LIGHTING

JAMES GURNEY shows how to create
a surrealistic townscape, on location

Who says you have to copy mundane reality when you're outside, plein air painting? Why not give the facts a surreal twist? I've always been interested in the two realms: the banal, commonplace stage on which we act out our lives and the realm of dreams just behind the veil. Here I want to explore where those two worlds intersect.

To get the ball rolling, I scout a location in a small town along the Hudson River in New York State. I consider some ways to transform the street scene in front of me. Maybe a giant snake is coming out of a manhole cover, or a 60-foot-tall cartoon figure is stepping over buildings like some sort of Toon-Zilla. If I bring a model car to the location, I can use it as a maquette and make it float up above the rooftops, perhaps lifted by a tractor beam.



To add to the mystery, I choose a time of day when the light is coming down at 45 degrees, but I'll limit the light to one beam illuminating just one house like a theatrical spotlight. This could never happen in the real world, because only an aperture in the clouds could frame a ray of light at that time of day. Those rays from clouds are not so focused. They transition from full light to full shadow very gradually – over the space of at least a city block. Smaller, more concentrated local spots of light could happen around sunset, but in that case, the light would be travelling almost horizontally. So whether the viewer is conscious of it or not, this targeted downlighting communicates an alien, strange feeling.

Why paint such a scene outside? The answer is that when I'm face to face with Nature, there are a thousand colour ideas and impressions that give my painting added conviction. And being on location is a huge kick in the pants for speeding up the painting process. I can get done in one afternoon what would otherwise take me a week in the studio.

I'll be using casein, a water-based paint with a milk protein binder that was popular before acrylics. It's a lot like gouache, ideally suited to fast, direct, opaque handling. It's also the physical paint technique most like Photoshop –except that there's no Cmd-Z.



James Gurney wrote *Color and Light and Imaginative Realism*, which both discuss the methods used in creating the New-York-

Times bestselling *Dinotopia* series. See James's video tutorials at www.jamesgurney.com.



MATERIALS

PAINTS

■ Richeson Casein, 2-3 of each primary colour and a big tube of white

BRUSHES

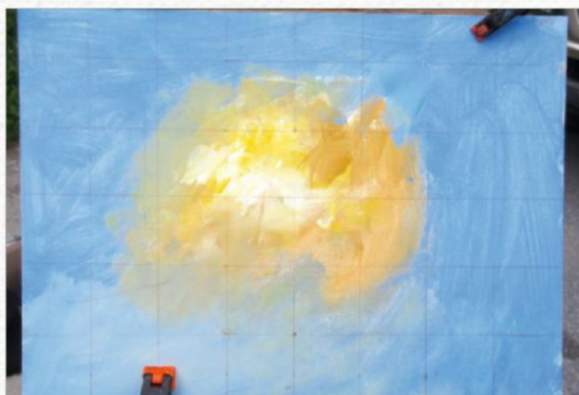
■ Cheap synthetic brushes, flats and rounds

OTHER TOOLS

■ A mixing tray made from the metal lid of pencil box
■ Traffic cone (to keep view open)

1 Start with thumbnails

First of all, I sketch up some ideas to explore the composition. Should the floating car be above the rooftops or below them? Should the light be coming from the right or the left? How dark should the sky be?



2 The yellow-blob underpainting

Even though I don't know the exact composition yet, I prime the heavyweight illustration board with an abstract underpainting in casein – a yellow blob in the centre of the panel, surrounded by a blue background.



3 Ready-made maquette

I bring a small model of a Volkswagen Beetle to the location to use as a reference maquette. By holding it up against the sky, I can see how it looks in the same lighting as the rest of the scene.



4 Get the drawing right

I carefully draw the scene with a red-brown watercolour pencil, paying careful attention to perspective. I place all the forms into a grid that matches a corresponding grid in my viewfinder.



5 Finishing area by area

I feel pretty confident about where I'm heading now, so I decide to paint this picture area by area, starting with the car and the sky behind it. Note the value shift in the area of casein that's still wet. As it dries, the paint lightens a value step or two.



6 Next comes the house

The amoeba of finished rendering moves downward to the house. I work out the shadow shapes by casting the shadow of the toy car onto a piece of cardboard held at the same relative angle as the house. ➡

PAINT TIP

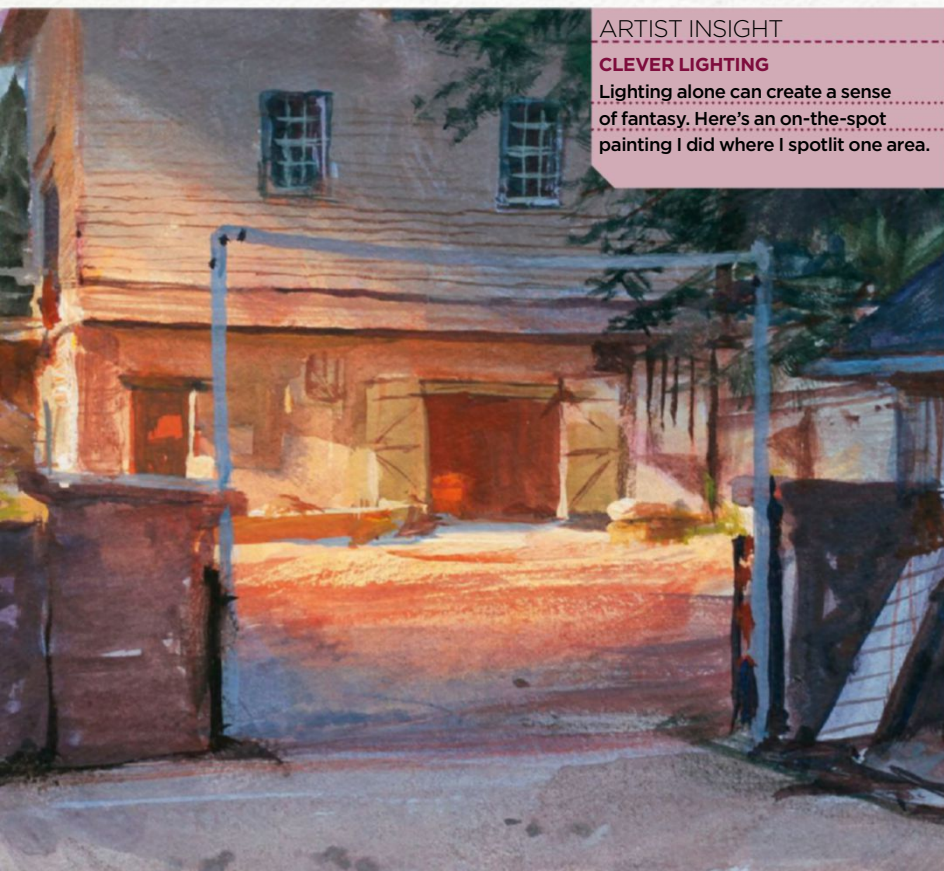
GIVE LIFE TO DARK COLOURS

Mix optical blacks (blue and brown) to give more character to your dark colours.

ARTIST INSIGHT

UNDERPAINTING ADVICE

Casein is opaque, so it covers up the underpainting, but the colours of the underpainting will still influence the painting.



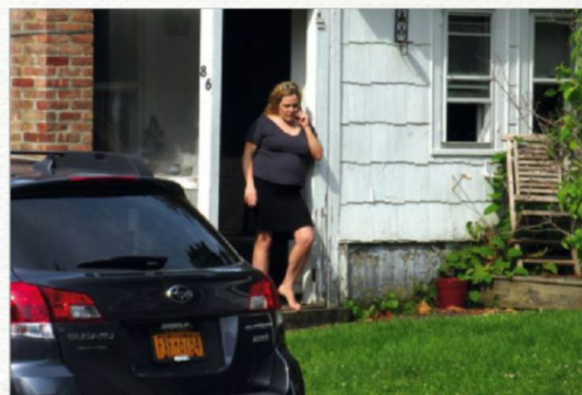
ARTIST INSIGHT

CLEVER LIGHTING

Lighting alone can create a sense of fantasy. Here's an on-the-spot painting I did where I spotlit one area.

7 *Building the neighbourhood*

The painting advances outward, moving into the zone lit by cool twilight. I mix these areas with darker and cooler colours, so a white object becomes a grey-blue, a fair darker than the warm whites in the illuminated area.



8 *Inspiration strikes*

A lady appears in the doorway of the house to talk on her cellphone. She's the key to the picture. Only a mobile phone could distract someone from the strange incident going on above.

In depth Dramatic lighting



9 *Painting in the lady*

She stands there for five minutes and I paint her into the scene. Casein works well for spontaneous changes. Unlike gouache it dries with a closed surface, so previous layers won't dissolve if you paint over them.



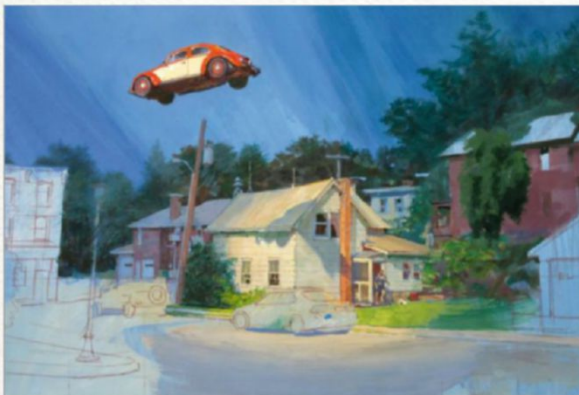
10 *Home stretch*

Here's what my painting and my setup look like at this stage. The homemade sketch easel attaches to a camera tripod. Neodymium magnets embedded in the easel grip the water cup and the metal mixing tray.

ART TIP

KEEP SOME CONTRAST

The shadow area and the lit area look best if there's a contrast of colour temperature as well as of value.



11 *Subordinating nonessentials*

The remaining areas play the role of supporting actors on a stage when someone else is talking. They serve only to support the central action, and they need to be played down with darker values and cooler colours.



LIGHT TIP

ACCENT AREAS

Just have one accent area of light. Two areas divides the power by half. More than two drains the life out.



12 *Filling in the final gaps*

The parked car picks up the colours of the scene around it. The up-facing planes catch the blue sky and the sides reflect the warm road. The view through the car glass to the house is tinted green.



ARTIST INSIGHT

WATER TRICKS

Three keys to success in opaque water media: use plenty of paint, lay it down boldly and don't be afraid to paint across edges.

Pencil

Pen

Marker

PAINTING COLOUR AND DETAIL

The animal kingdom is full of colour and unique ornamentations, and depicting them is crucial to creating realistic animals, says **BRYNN METHENEY**

Nature is full of amazing adaptations and traits. Bright colours, fluorescent patterns, tusks, horns, dewlaps and much else – traits used for camouflage, attracting mates, intimidation, battling rivals or finding food. These details can make your animal drawings pop and it all begins with drawing, of course.

I'll start by finding the structure of forms like crests and horns with pencil. It's important to add in texture and an

indication of volume. Perspective is important when it comes to horns and antlers, so I'll break things into shapes and planar views.

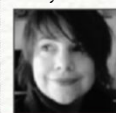
You'll want to map out where your highlights and shadows will be. Working in marker, I'll be building up from lights to darks and plotting out my whites.

Layering colour is key, too. Nature doesn't just come in 12 colours, there are lots of colours in between. Don't be afraid to throw a bit of green into that giraffe or a bit of blue into that elephant. It'll help

MATERIALS

- 2H and HB Caran D'ache Grafwood pencil
- Kneaded eraser
- Canson Marker Pad Paper
- Copic Markers, various colours
- Micron fine-tipped pen

keep the colour from looking flat and make it feel like the animal could be in an environment. Any type of marker you're comfortable with will do for this. In fact, almost any medium you use will abide to the same principles of colour and design. Only the method of application changes.



Brynn specialises in creature design, fantasy illustration and visual development for film, games and publishing. She lives and works in Oakland, California.

www.brynnart.com

I like to sketch in structure first. I'm always building animals from the inside out, and wireframes and boxes help me see in perspective.



Adding contour lines along the forms can help you see where the forms are turning in space.

Start light with your pencil and work up those textures. Remember to keep them sparse and random looking.



Drawing chips to the horn and irregular textures can add personality to your animal.

ARTIST INSIGHT LAYERING PAPERS

Marker paper is transparent and ideal for building up studies without losing your work. You can always take your planar drawings and use a sheet of paper on top to complete them.

2 Indicate texture and detail

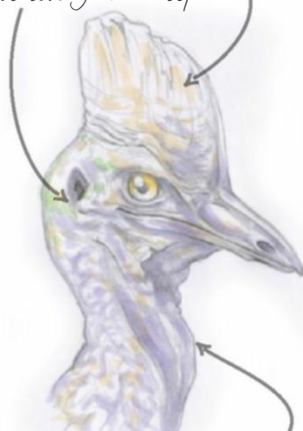
I begin to add in textures, ridges, damage and detail into the ornamentations. Some animals, like the iguana, have fleshy dewlaps so it requires a different approach to detail and texture, and reference becomes important. Go to zoos, museums, watch nature documentaries and search hi-res images. Nature is seldom perfect. Adding nicks, damage and uneven edges enhances the drawing.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

1 Find shape and structure

I start light and build up my drawing from boxes and wireframes. You can break hard shapes such as horns, antlers and tusks into planar views. The planar view helps find the perspective in shapes that might not be boxy. You can find the 'planes' and place them in space.

I lay down a base of purple for the cassowary, but also a bit of yellow. This helps warm up the base and keep the colour interesting and deep.

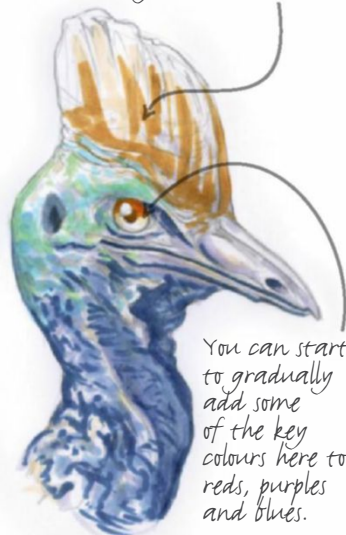


I tend to use the broader side of my marker for this step, to cover more ground quickly.

3 Find your highlights

Now that we're moving into colour, I use my lightest marker to lay in a base colour. This is mostly to figure out where my highlights will be. I'm working light to dark, so it's important to keep my whites untouched. Markers have the ability to layer on themselves.

Blending is all about going back and forth with markers. Lay in your base, then lay in your mid-tones and revisit with the base colour again to blend.



You can start to gradually add some of the key colours here too: reds, purples and blues.

4 Blend and block in shadows

I use my mid-range marker to lay in where I want my shadows. I begin to go back and forth between my lightest and my mid-range colour, to blend shapes together. By adding yellow to the cassowary's neck it enhances the purple next to it.



MARKERS

CLEAN TIPS!

Sometimes your lighter coloured markers will pick up pencil lead as you work. Wipe the tip before you begin to colour.

It's important to hold off on markings until the end. Things like stripes are best saved for last – they can smudge when drawn over.



You can also add in a bit of background indication to help pop your final colour job.

5 Detail and sharp edges

Now, you can really get into those details and polish your colour piece. Add in your darkest darks now so they won't become smudged by lighter colours. This is also the time to add in markings such as spots and stripes or anything that has a hard edge. Fur and scales can also be defined here, but keep it sparse: too much rendering can make forms look flat.

Things like pupils and deep cracks can be drawn in using a fine-tipped pen, like a Micron.

First Impressions

✧ William Stout ✧

The film, comics and murals artist talks dinosaurs and a doubting wife



When did you realise you had some talent for painting?

I hit and missed with oils, until I encountered Norman Rockwell's process and studied Frank Frazetta's painting techniques. I built upon those foundations. My wife often told me, "Give up on oils – you're so much better with other media." Until 1989, when I began painting my first museum one-man show. My chops improved dramatically (and finally made my wife a believer).

Did your distinctive comic book art style develop naturally?

As a teen I copied Carmine Infantino, Gil Kane and Murphy Anderson comics, then discovered Frazetta, Jean Giraud, Will Eisner and Robert Crumb. I was fortunate in assisting Russ Manning on the Tarzan of the Apes newspaper strips, and Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder on Little Annie Fanny. Their mentoring greatly increased my skills and taught me what it took to be a professional.

Of the film projects you've worked on, do you have a favourite?

Return of the Living Dead. It was brutal to make, but now it's a cult classic. Masters of the Universe was fun. Pan's Labyrinth may be my best film. Designing Jon Favreau's Magic Kingdom was great until Disney's attorneys got involved, killing that dream. I enjoyed creating Disney's Dinosaur characters – though I wish they'd never talked!

How did your natural history work come about?

I've loved dinosaurs ever since watching King Kong aged three. My pal Don Glut was revising The Dinosaur Dictionary because of all the new dinosaur discoveries. The four pictures Don asked me to draw became 44. I reasoned these might be the only depictions ever of these creatures, so accuracy was vital.



UPPER CRETACEOUS ANTARCTICA

"This work depicts speculation that creatures that dwelled on Africa, South America and Australasia during the Mesozoic also existed on the land mass between them: Antarctica."

I joined the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, using each dinosaur's discoverer as my adviser. The environments demanded accuracy, so I studied palaeobotany. During a visit my publisher asked, "If you could do your own book, what would you do?" Figuring he was just being conversational, my brilliant reply was, "I dunno". He saw Dinosaur Dictionary illustrations scattered about my studio.

“I've loved dinosaurs ever since watching King Kong at the age of three”

DIRTY SPLIFF BLUES

"Lately my career has come full circle and I've been creating lots of CD/LP covers. This 2015 cover for the blues rock band Left Lane Cruiser is intended to help establish this distinctive zombie as a form of branding for the band."



"How about doing one on dinosaurs?" "Sure." I forgot this conversation. Two months later he called. "Bill, we've got our book deal. Bantam wants to do your dinosaur book!" A gigantic project had dropped in my lap. The Dinosaurs: A Fantastic New View of a Lost Era became the first book to illustrate every recent dinosaur discovery. I've been known as 'The Dinosaur Man' ever since.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? And, any low points?

Working on Theodore Rex was a definite low. Starring Whoopi Goldberg in a part written for Val Kilmer, the massive chest pains I was suffering disappeared the moment I quit this most expensive direct-to-video movie ever made. A career highlight promptly followed: being awarded the National Science Foundation's 1992/1993 Antarctic Artists and Writers Program grant. While spending three months painting 130 field studies in Antarctica, I scuba dived beneath the ice, camped in the Dry Valleys and scaled an active volcano. I then drove 1,000 miles through southern Chile, documenting the forests that have remained relatively unchanged over the past 40,000,000 years.

What's been your most challenging commission to date?

The 12 prehistoric murals I painted for the San Diego Natural History Museum includes my largest canvas: 14x34ft. While painting the murals I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. So I offered the museum the option to replace me. To my amazement and relief, they stuck with me, even though it meant the murals would be behind schedule. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Mick Hager, the museum's visionary director. Of everything I do, I enjoy painting murals (and my Legends of the Blues books) the most. They're big, public and permanent. A real legacy.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

"Keep your big mouth shut," and, "More life drawing". I practise three hours of figure drawing every Sunday: it's the quickest way to improve as an artist.


You can see plenty more of William's work, buy merchandise and read his blog, at his website, www.williamstout.com.



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"I've always been impressed (and envious) by Brian's continual thirst for growth and rebirth with his art—both of which have been simply staggering. His endeavors prove again and again that he is an innovator and never an imitator."

- GREG CAPULLO ARTIST: BATMAN, SPAWN

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